

BBC

Weald of dreams: find England's forgotten Eden

COUNTRYFILE

Last of the Summer walks

14 sensational days out – explore woods, hills and coast

PLUS Scrumptious picnic recipes • ideal walking kit • wildlife to spot

John Craven
Is organic food better for you?

Why birds are cool

A 12-year-old's expert guide

200 years of piers

Celebrate a seaside wonder

Agatha Christie's Devon

Investigate a land of murder and mystery

The fall of the great country house



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Steam into September...

This month's cover image – a beguiling sunset over the Devon coast near Salcombe – sums up this whole issue. We're entering the golden season, late summer and early autumn when several factors combine to make the countryside particularly benign and inviting.

Harvests are in – or coming in – and there's a wealth of fruits and other tempting offerings in the markets as well as endless foraging opportunities. This is a very good time of year to explore all the footpaths around your home, even if you live in the city, and make a note of all the best blackberry bushes, apples trees, elder bushes, damsons and hazels. I have an OS map of my local area on a wall with flags all over it – a sort of battlemag for foraging.

On top of the fruitfulness, the weather is often good-natured, the sea is at its warmest and, dare I say, the summer holidays are over, so there are no crowds, even in the hotspots. So we've brought together our writers' best ideas for making the most of the countryside this month in our "Last of the summer walks" feature beginning on page 87. And for more in-depth explorations –

perhaps a weekend break – let us tempt you to explore the secretive wooded hills and valleys that make up the Weald in Sussex (page 18), or the dramatic landscape of Devon that inspired the Queen of Crime, Agatha Christie (page 52).

I commute by train from countryside to city everyday so I have few kinds words for this mode of transport (it was quicker and more reliable in the days of steam). However, there is one line that still has an air of romance – a line that perhaps should never have been built and survived to this day by the skin of its teeth. Andrew White takes a ride on the epic Settle to Carlisle railway to reveal its surprisingly murky history and modern day thrills (page 28). Best of all, he finds rail passengers smiling!

I hope you can make the most of the golden month ahead.

Fergus

Fergus Collins, editor

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The spectacular Settle to Carlisle line thrills even the most world-weary commuter as it sprints through the landscape

Photos: David Cheshire, Sean Maydon



87 Great late-summer walks: including exploring the towering Malham Cove

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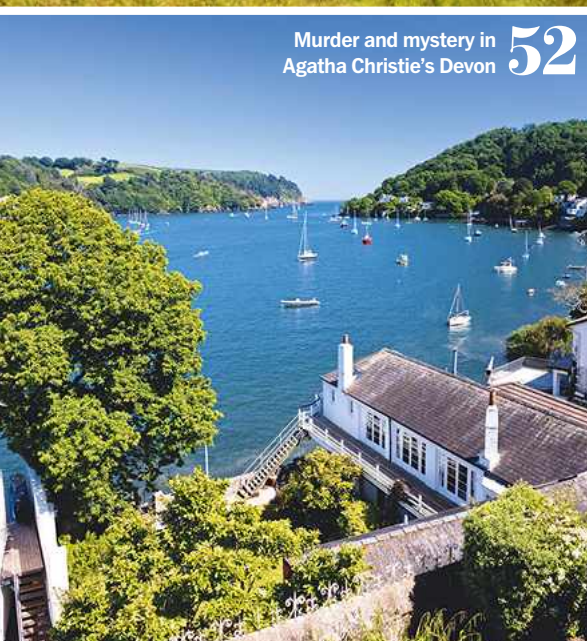
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September in the country

nature | people & places | country know-how | at the market

Three cheers for piers!

To celebrate the 200th anniversary of piers, we're featuring a glorious sunset image of Clevedon Pier in North Somerset, which won last year's much-coveted Pier of the Year award (you can just imagine its lengthy acceptance speech).

Britain's first pier was completed in 1814 at Ryde on the Isle of Wight, and piers once had a special place at the heart of British holidaymaking. Only 61 survive today but, happily, they are witnessing a renaissance due to increased funding and revived nostalgia. Clevedon Pier was saved from collapse a few years ago and you can have tea in the tiny pavilion at the end – ferries also pick up passengers for trips around the Bristol Channel. You can catch cod off it too... Line up!

• Our 10 best piers: www.countryfile.com/countryside/top-10-uk-piers





Nature in September

Watching wildlife in the amber autumn months

By Dominic Couzens

Butterflies Buddleia bounty

A quirk of autumn is that some of the best wild floral displays are from plants that came from other parts of the world. Buddleia, a shrub from China, should have an OBE for services to the British butterfly population. At the moment there is no better place to look for red admirals, peacocks and painted ladies than at a flowering buddleia – you wonder what on earth the insects did before the bush appeared at the end of the 19th century.



Don't miss: the red deer rut

If you've never seen or heard red deer rutting, go this year. Bellowing stags clash, locking antlers in jaw-dropping wrestling bouts with the winner gaining control over harems of hinds. The rut begins in mid-September and some of the best sites include Exmoor, Suffolk coast, Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire, Richmond Park in London and in many parts of Scotland. At the Beinn Eighe and Creag Meagaidh reserves, there are special red deer rut walks arranged by Scottish Natural Heritage.

📄 www.snh.gov.uk



Three tips for wildlife gardening in September

- 1** Refrain from too much weeding, if you can. The died-back vegetation will provide habitat for wildlife.
- 2** If you have a meadow, do the last cut of the year (to about 7.5cm) and leave the clippings for a couple of days before raking.
- 3** Now is the time to provide a box in which your garden hedgehog can hibernate. Try burying a wooden box under leaves.

Mythbuster: Are autumn swallows 'late'?

In fact, the peak departure of swallows from our shores occurs in the third week of September and it's normal to see good numbers throughout October. Only in November could the swallows you see be described as late.





Find a hobby

The Spitfire of Britain's raptors is about to depart

One of our most exciting raptors is doing well. The *Bird Atlas 2007-11* shows a 16% increase of hobbies in Britain between 1995 and 2010. In autumn, the youngsters have hatched and are hungry – in a week or two they must fly to Africa to spend the winter.

This bird is a real-life rollercoaster – it will dive, spin, turn and slow, all within a few seconds. Once found only in the south, the hobby is heading north. Lakes are great places to see them, as they gather there to catch dragonflies or chase small birds such as swallows.

With its swooping, looping, ducking and diving, the hobby is one of the most thrilling birds to watch in flight

Tell wasps from hornets

These social insects are highly visible this month



LEFT Hornets are larger with more caramel tones
RIGHT Wasps (here, a common wasp) are smaller with yellow and black colouration

What was it that stung you – a wasp or a hornet?

Hornets are types of wasp, but they are twice as big as a normal wasp – and at least half as big again as the biggest queen wasp. In fact, they aren't easy to confuse, because along with their large size, they are brown and black, rather than yellow and black. The back of the thorax and front part of the

abdomen is a smart caramel colour.

Despite being twice as big as a wasp, the sting is no worse. And hornets are far more placid than other social wasps.

Neither should be confused with the harmless hoverfly, some species of which are adapted to look like hornets. However, they always have a distinctly rounded abdomen and fly differently, with more hovering.

Nature events



Autumn grouse gala

It may be autumn but some birds are already thinking about pairing up. Male black grouse gather at the 'lek' – a sort of wild arena where they prance and display, hoping to woo passing females – think *The Full Monty* on moorland. See countryfile.com/blackgrouse for information on where to see them – but be prepared to be there at dawn.

Nature news



Barrel jellyfish boom

The papers have reported an 'invasion' of large jellyfish off southern UK shores this year. The species is the barrel jellyfish, which is common far offshore; what is unusual is that this harmless, dustbin-lid-sized invertebrate has been seen much closer to land than usual, and in some numbers. Look out for it.



Black-winged stilts arrive

A small cabal of beautiful black-winged stilts from the Mediterranean have set up home in two sites in southern England for the first time in 27 years. Overseas, they often feed at the feet of flamingos, which share their love of sheltered saline water. Maybe the famous pink birds will be next?

Breeding like rabbits?

Author Jeanette Winterson got into hot water recently for killing and eating a rabbit, saying that the numbers in her garden needed to be controlled. There are about 37 million rabbits in the UK, which are only now making a comeback after being depleted by rabbit haemorrhagic disease. Mr McGregor won't be happy about that...



People & places

September's country festivals and customs

Compiled by **Martin Maudsley**, storyteller and folklorist

Season of mellow fruitfulness

Get to know your onions, gulp a glut of garlic, or dress up as Mr Darcy – there's plenty of food and fun to be reaped in the harvesting month



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE

An onion seller clutches his crop; a prize-winning basket of delight; visitors inspect the eye-watering array of offerings

13 September

Onion bazaar

Proudly claiming to be the country's only annual event dedicated to the humble onion, Newent Onion Fayre has deep roots back to the 13th century, when the town first became famous for its edible alliums. It has now grown into the largest one-day event in Gloucestershire, pulling in crowds of 15,000 with stalls of local food and drink, live music and street entertainment. The highlight of the day is the onion show, where exhibits are judged for size and quality by an official panel from the National Vegetable Society (who certainly know their onions). In recent years, the show has added a cooking-with-onions category, children's vegetable carving and an onion-eating competition – the fastest time for eating a whole raw onion.

📍 www.newentonionfayre.org



“Autumn is the mellower season, and what we lose in flowers we more than gain in fruits.”

Samuel Butler

events this month



20-21 September

Favourite feast

Abergavenny Food Festival becomes an epicurean epicentre during its annual celebration of fine cuisine held across the town, including the castle grounds. There's a focus on seasonal foods from Wales and the Marches, complemented by artisanal produce from further afield along with talks and tastings. The festival was named 'Best Event in Wales' last year.

abergavennyfoodfestival.com



until 14 September

Fields of fire

The broken battlefields of France contrast with calm English meadows in an exhibition by two of Britain's greatest 20th-century landscape painters. Brothers John and Paul Nash became official war artists during the First World War and later painted many landscapes in Suffolk, Essex and Dorset. *Brothers in Art* brings together more than 40 artworks at the Royal West of England Academy, Bristol.

www.rwa.org.uk

12-21 September

Bennets in bonnets

The Jane Austen Festival, an extravagant 10 days of Regency glamour in Bath, includes guided walks, readings and a parade of costumed characters. This year there will be an 'Austen-tatious' attempt to set an official Guinness World Record for the largest gathering of people dressed in Regency costumes.

www.janeaustenfestivalbath.co.uk



Our writer Martin, far left, valiantly gobbles garlic in a bid to make friends and alienate people



13 September

Can you beat the garlic eaters?

The World Garlic Eating Competition is held at the George Inn in Chideock, west Dorset. It started last year as a less prickly spin-off to the nearby nettle-eating contest – and I took part in the inaugural competition. We were given five minutes to munch as many cloves of garlic (all supplied by the South West Garlic farm) as possible. Official observers check

that each clove is chewed before swallowing, and a barrel of local cider is on tap to help wash it all down. My delight at managing to eat 35 cloves and achieve a respectable fourth place (the winner, Oliver Farmer, polished off 49) was offset by the social exclusion I experienced for the following 24 hours...

www.worldgarliceatingcompetition.co.uk

Surfers give way to foodies at the Newquay fish festival this month



12-14 September

All the fun of the fish festival

Now in its 12th year, the three-day Newquay Fish Festival offers a chance for the town, famous for its lively nightlife, to show off the produce and prestige of its working fishing harbour. The diversity of delicious seafood caught from the Cornish coast is matched by the renowned culinary skills of local chefs keen to flaunt their food through tastings and demonstrations. While the harbourside is bursting with marine flavours, the beach bustles with family entertainment from sand castle competitions to rock pool shows. Watch out for the town's famed harbour seals who might pop up to make a celebrity appearance...

www.newquayfishfestival.co.uk



Country know-how

Get to know the countryside better

Reading the landscape by **Ian Vince**; country talk by **Adam Jacot de Boinod**

Adam Henson



Adam Henson's field guide to farming in Britain

Secrets of the livestock market

A visit to a British livestock market has not varied much down the generations. There's the hustle and bustle as animals arrive and are manoeuvred into pens; determined sellers and curious buyers eyeing each other with friendly suspicion; the bleating and lowing of the livestock as the auctioneer frenetically calls out the prices. This type of trading has stayed more or less the same for 1,000 years. William the Conqueror's famous Domesday Book mentions 42 markets in the land where animals were bought and sold. But in recent decades they have become far less common.

Modern markets

Traditional livestock markets have vanished from many town and city centres over the past 50 years. At first they were affected by the closure of many local butchers' shops, as supermarkets became popular. Then, when prices for urban real estate increased, the land they occupied was often sold for development.

More recently changes have included direct marketing to the customer and internet sales. Although there are fewer auction sites in the UK these days, the weekly sale of cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry is far from dead. Large regional markets near major A-roads and motorways have emerged. Modern buildings at Cirencester, Sedgemoor and Hereford, with easy loading bays, meeting rooms and catering facilities, are a world away from the old town centre sites.

When to sell?

The right time to send livestock to market differs from animal to animal, depending on their breed, age, weight and the season. For instance, lowland farmers will aim to sell their lambs for meat when they are about four months old. Producers talk about "presenting" animals for sale and "good



Let us present: weaned calves being sold through a livestock auction

finishing" – that's about increasing the potential value by selecting the animals that will attract the most bidders. In the case of store cattle, they need to be lean, with the ability to increase in weight without getting too fat too quickly. Strong limbed, dehorned cattle that have had their coats clipped will draw a crowd.

Spot Old Spots

Apart from really big markets of the past such as Banbury and Gloucester, a visit to a livestock auction has never been considered much of a day out for the uninitiated. But there are exceptions. The Cirencester market holds a rare, native and traditional breeds sale; it's incredibly popular with non-farmers and even attracts families who go to see Old Spot pigs, Cotswold sheep and Gloucester cattle parading around the auction ring.

Animal welfare

The UK has some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world – the British parliament introduced the first animal welfare legislation in the world in 1822 with the 'Act to Prevent the Cruel and Improper Treatment of Cattle'. Nearly 200 years later, precise rules ensure all animals are treated humanely. At auction, the market operator has 'temporary responsibility' for all livestock being bought and sold. That means suitable pens, the right food and proper bedding, enough water to drink and protection from pain or injury. It's illegal for livestock that are unfit for sale to go into the auction ring and there are strict penalties, including prison sentences, for anyone flouting the law.

Watch Adam on *Countryfile* every Sunday evening on BBC One.



What country topic would you like to know more about?
Email your suggestions to editor@countryfile.com

reading the landscape

Under-standing stones...

There is something about standing stones that is strangely captivating. Their peculiar, ambiguous form draws your attention first. Many menhirs (an alternative name that translates as 'long stone' in Cornish or Breton) appear as isolated, accusing fingers that do little but point at the sky, lending them an air of mystery. Then there is the extravagant effort required to quarry, transport and erect them, when our ancestors must have had other calls on their time. Finally there is the question of purpose. Are they ancient memorials, avatars of ancestors still at large in the landscape or did they have a more prosaic function?

Sadly, the thinking that drove our megalithic cultures to do this is lost to us now and we may have to make do with the mystique that remains, along with the consolation that visiting our most interesting stones leads us to corners of Britain that are fascinating in their own right.

Rocks around the clock

The stones are part of a wider landscape upon which our ancestors erected stone circles, dolmen, barrows, avenues and other pieces of Neolithic or Bronze Age field furniture. In a few cases, they are found in a small group of other stones forming rows or odd arrangements and for which there is frequently a legend attached.

One of the most bizarre arrangements of stones is at the Mên-an-Tol on Penwith in Cornwall – a holed stone, about a metre high, is aligned between two short standing stones, almost certainly not in their original positions. It's thought to be part of a former circle, with the holed stone probably part of a long-forgotten nearby tomb, but in its rearranged form it is



associated with a treasury of miracles, from healing rickets to magical fertility rites.

At Rudston in the East Riding of Yorkshire, the Devil was supposed to have thrown a stone at the church and missed, but Rudston Monolith was here long before the church and at 7.6m high – Britain's tallest and 40 tons in weight – it easily matches its younger cousin in gravitas.

Scotland's tallest, Clach-an-Truiseil (the Stone of Compassion) is a stone's throw from the northwestern coast of Lewis in the Western Isles. At 5.8m it's the sole surviving monolith from a complete circle, of which there are no shortage on Lewis. Its original purpose was surely about making a connection – one that has endured between its builders and the landscape for 5,000 years.



TOP Hole in one: the mysterious Men-an-tol standing stones at Penwith **ABOVE** Rudstone Monolith, the tallest in the land

country talk: harvest talk

Apples and berries, vegetables and peas – gathering up the language

dudman (1674) a scarecrow made of old garments

griggles (Wiltshire) small worthless apples still on the tree after the crop has been gathered in

agarves (Sussex) may berries

hurts (Sussex) whortle berries

winterpicks (Sussex) blackthorn berries

hogarves (Sussex) hawthorn berries

chimp (Wiltshire) the grown-out shoot of a stored potato

claick (Scots) the last armful of

grain cut at harvest (also called the kim-cut, mulden, or kim-baby: it was often kept and hung by a ribbon above the fireplace)

reesome (Lincolnshire) to place peas in small heaps

graff (Shropshire) a spade's depth in digging (delve: two spade's deep)



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In season

Food and drink to enjoy this month

By Richard Aslan, food writer

The Englishman's grape Elderberries

By the time the summer has mellowed into the start of autumn, the heady scent of elderflowers is a distant memory and their tight green buds have ripened into a thousand near-black berries. The berries are so heavy with juice that their weight pulls the branches that bear them down into elegant curves. At a generous harvest, the sheer abundance of fruit can be overwhelming. Luckily, our long association with this versatile berry means we have developed many delicious ways of preparing it. It is a messy business – expect to be sporting purple-stained hands for days – but given how tasty and nutritious this fruit is, it is well worth the effort.

The five best ways to use them:

- 1 Stew them:** The Food Standards Agency doesn't recommend eating elderberries raw as the stems and leaves contain cyanide. Although most people suffer no ill effects from eating the fruit, it's best to remove all stalks carefully with a fork and cook the berries to break down toxins. The stewed fruit is delicious with Greek yoghurt.
- 2 Make them into jam:** Elderberry jam is rich, dark and zingy. Choose ripe berries or the result will be very tart. The fruit is low in pectin, so lemon juice is needed to ensure it sets. Crush a kilo of berries with a wooden spoon and add 300g of sugar. Simmer until soft and pulpy, then sieve to remove the seeds. Add a further 700g of sugar and the juice of two large lemons. Allow to bubble for around half an hour, or until it sets.
- 3 Make elderberry syrup:** Elderberry syrup is extremely high in vitamins A and C and used as



a traditional remedy for colds and flu. Clean the berries and cover with water. Bring to the boil and simmer for 20 minutes. Press the mixture through a sieve to remove all pulp and seeds, then add 450g of sugar for each pint (474ml) of juice. Add a few cloves if you choose, boil for a further 10 minutes and then bottle.

- 4 Cook them into a pie or crumble:** Elderberries can be too intense when used as a filling ingredient on their own. They work wonders, however, when added to apple, blackberries, raspberries and currants.

ABOVE Elderberries are packed with juice, but their stems and leaves are toxic, so prepare them carefully

5 recipe Elderberry liqueur

The method for making elderberry liqueur is similar to that for making sloe gin. The flavour infuses more easily if the skin of the berries is broken in some way. You can mash them with a wooden spoon, freeze them, or – for the patient among you – prick each fruit with a pin.

450g berries
225 g caster sugar
1 litre good-quality gin or vodka

Place the berries into a clean jar, add the caster sugar and the gin or vodka. Seal the concoction tightly and shake. Keep the mixture somewhere cool for at least three months, giving it a good shake every fortnight. When the colour is rich and dark, strain the syrup into bottles. Make it now, and it will be ready in time for Christmas!



Garden challenge: Grow perfect veg with Jim Buttress

SEVEN TASKS FOR SEPTEMBER

- 1.** Lettuce sown last month for spring harvest should be covered with a cloche towards the end of the month.
- 2.** Put winter squash and pumpkins in a sunny place to ripen.
- 3.** Plant onion sets suitable for over-wintering, as well as spring cabbage and spring greens. They must be protected from pigeons.
- 4.** New strawberries can be propagated from runners into prepared ground.
- 5.** Remove yellowing leaves and any 'blown' sprouts from Brussels sprouts.
- 6.** If you are growing leeks and chives, watch out for orange pustules on the leaves. This is caused by leek rust. Unfortunately, there is no control. However,

diseased plants usually produce good quality edible parts. Lift immediately and burn or dispose of infected debris.

- 7.** At the end of the month, cut down asparagus foliage.

one Jim Buttress is a judge on *The Patch: The Big Allotment Challenge*, on the BBC this spring. See *Radio Times* for details.

Candida Lycett Green

Rural affairs are woefully under-reported and the BBC should shoulder its share of the blame



Candida Lycett Green

is an author and countrywoman, and the daughter of Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman. She lives in the Vale of the White Horse, Oxfordshire

“The other day the district nurse who lives across the stream from me was complaining about the lack of rural coverage on the BBC. “It’s almost as though life outside London doesn’t exist,” she said. And this criticism has been backed up by a recent BBC Trust review, which found a deficit in reporting of rural affairs. Considering that more than 95 percent of Britain is farmland, woodland, mountain or moorland and that 12 million of us live in it (while many millions more value it for all sorts of reasons), it seems odd that the BBC provides such scant rural coverage.

Farming Today was once part of my life, before it became marginalised – squashed in at 5.45am before the six o’clock news. I seldom hear it these days. Although I am only a hobby farmer, what I loved about it was its solid authenticity, which I just can’t find by listening to the business news. *On Your Farm* is now on at 6.35am on a Sunday morning. The timing shows just how little importance the BBC attaches to a vital part of our lives. After all, we are all rural consumers, and 99% of us eat food from UK farms.

Cooke knew his bacon

Two years ago, the post of ‘rural affairs correspondent’ was axed for cost-cutting reasons. Jeremy Cooke, who was the last in the post, had a proper understanding of rural affairs, sometimes commentating from a quad bike on his remote

farm in the Wye Valley. He could raise intelligent points about GM crops, about pesticides and organic farming, the Common Fisheries Policy or that murky subject of the Common Agricultural Policy. He could explain why what happens in Brussels can have an effect on every corner of the UK. Now there is no one with that depth of knowledge.

However, the BBC employ an arts editor, who will comment at some length on the *Six O’Clock News* about the sale of a Francis Bacon painting to a New York buyer, while no one comments on a chunk of Lincolnshire being sold to a Dutch corporate farming company. Well, I would argue that much of our landscape is a priceless work of art wrought by nature. Just glimpsing the coverage of the Tour de France brought back the glory of the Yorkshire Dales and its villages and it was universally acknowledged that it was the landscape through which the bikers were riding that was the real star of the show.

Countryfile’s wide coverage

Countryfile, which takes us deep into the landscape of Britain, gets more viewers than *EastEnders*. Its audience encompasses a broad church – from urban communities to wildly opinionated farmers – so I question why the BBC doesn’t cash in on the fact. For me, there is something anchoring and reassuring about *Countryfile*. I need the down-to-earth reality of the programme content – Adam Henson’s visit to the cattle market to look for a new White Park bull or Ellie Harrison clambering up bracken-filled hillsides in Wales searching for a herd of deer.

I also like the fact that it’s all on our doorstep. Although it may seem ordinary compared to David Attenborough’s other worlds, we can all identify with it and on our next foray into the countryside, view it with a greater breadth of knowledge and even a deeper understanding. This must be good for the health of the nation. So, “Dear Chairman of the BBC, I for one would like to see/hear more programmes about rural affairs...”

Due to ill-health, this will be Candida’s last column for *BBC Countryfile Magazine*. We would like to thank her for her wonderful work over the past two years and wish her all the best for the future.



Have your say...

What do you think about the issues raised here? Write to the address on page 80 or email editor@countryfile.com



Countryfile’s Tom Heap is one of the BBC’s few dedicated rural reporters

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Weald of dreams

Whitewashed windmills, wooded valleys, shutter-boarded cottages, sunken lanes, oast houses and crumbling castles...

Jack Watkins wanders the Weald, a sublime relic of Old England



This spectral shot of Ashdown Forest perfectly captures the haunting, timeless essence of the Weald

Photo: Sam Moore / Sussex Scenes



ABOVE A view over the fields of the high-yield Weald from Goudhurst, Kent
RIGHT The windmill at the foot of the property in Shipley, Sussex, formerly owned by the author Hilaire Belloc, and now part of the set of *Jonathan Creek* **BELOW** Previously a hammer pond for 16th-century iron works and still one of the largest bodies of water in West Sussex, manmade Knepp Mill Pond is a haven for wetland wildlife
LEFT Battle Abbey and battlefield, East Sussex, the scene of the battle of Hastings in 1066



The southern counties of Kent and Sussex have something for everyone. Rolling swards of downland draw seekers of sublime viewing points. A chain of seaside resorts seduce sun worshippers and lovers of all things maritime. But the pursuer of secret places, of dark and shady corners, just goes for a walk in the Weald.

The charms of this historic region – its slow and easy rises sloping into huddled, drowsy woodiness – are less immediately apparent for the unfamiliar visitor than the more obviously touristy attractions, but once the Weald has ensnared you, it won't let you go. And you're in good company when you succumb. Rudyard Kipling and Hilaire Belloc were literary champions of the South Downs but, approaching middle age, they both made their homes in the Weald and lived there for the rest of their lives.

The blue Weald

The Weald was once an enormous wood – the name is from the old English word meaning “forest”. It was so thick that it was deemed an impenetrable, rather frightening no-man's land, the haunt of brigands and highwaymen. Yeoman farmers found plots in the clearings, with soils predominantly of thin sandstone or heavy clay, brought low yields. Even today, farms are small scale and scattered, with thrifty native breeds of sheep and cattle a speciality. Roads are still relatively few, underscoring the sense of seclusion and isolation.

Find an elevated prospect from the slopes of the Downs, just south of Lewes, looking east, as I love to do, and you'll see why poets have often called it “the blue Weald”, on account of the play of light – the green of its low hills, meadows and woods set off by the blue of the sea beyond – that seems to clothe the land in a dreamlike, translucent veil.

It lies between the two chalk escarpments of south eastern England – the North and South Downs – and ranges over areas of Sussex, Hampshire, Surrey and Kent.

The Weald is actually in two parts. The sandstone High Weald undulates its sleepy way from Romney Marsh in Kent through the Ashdown Forest and into West Sussex.



Pevensey Castle in East Sussex, the landing place of William the Conqueror's army

The clay of the Low Weald is flatter and forms a girdle round it, from the flatlands east of Beachy Head, west into West Sussex, and then curving back east to form an outer rim on the Surrey border and on into Kent. It's the plainer sibling of the two, though it's also fringed by an attractive greensand ridge that has some high and scenic reaches in West Sussex, including Blackdown Hill.

Rural utopia

The Low Weald certainly has its share of characterful sections. At Shipley, near Horsham, I wander leafy lanes and feel as if

I have jumped back half a dozen centuries. No wonder Hilaire Belloc, who hated industrialisation and dreamt of a rural utopia, settled here in 1906, buying a house with a windmill at the end of the garden.

The mill is visible from the track running beside the property, which had later fame as the home of the TV detective Jonathan Creek. The Countryman Inn, serving Sussex bitters, would surely have been a regular watering hole, as Belloc was fond of a glass of ale.

Not far away, Knepp Mill Pond – large as a lake – was a hammer pond for the local iron works, a huge local industry in the 16th century. It misses the environmental point for pro-frackers to say “there you are, the Wealden soil was always exploited,” but »

“The forest was once so thick it was deemed a frightening no-man's land”



Life on the high Weald

Pete Marden has been a trugmaker for 19 years. His workshop is deep in the Weald at Herstmonceux. “I grew up in West Sussex and was an antique clock repairer, but fancied doing something practical in conservation, like a woodland craft. After I moved to East Sussex, making trugs – once used for measuring out grains and feeds on farms, but these days used for various purposes about the home and garden – seemed a good choice.”

Sweet chestnut – a distinctive tree of High Weald woods, with its gnarled and spiralling bark and large serrated leaves – is his material sourced from ancient coppiced woods, although Pete says Wealden farmers used to make them from bits of ash wood lying around their fields. Now he's one of only a handful of trugmakers left, practising a technique that is “reputedly hundreds of years old, making a product much more durable and hardwearing than plastic”.

www.trugger.co.uk/ 01323 832 314



The village of Burwash in the Weald was Rudyard Kipling's home in later years

» you can see the thinking. Today the pond is managed for nature, attracting wetland birds such as wigeon and pochard. King John loved to hunt the deer you still see lurking in the tree cover through the fields. There's not much left of the old Knepp Castle, but the ruins are enough to appeal to the imagination of any picturesque traveller.

Great fortitude

The Low Weald also has one of Britain's oldest fortresses – Pevensey Castle stands above marshes reclaimed from the sea. The Romans built the first fort and called it Anderida, and its still substantial walls are incorporated within its Norman successor. On the beaches here William the Conqueror landed in 1066. You can follow the 1066 Country Walk over to Battle and the slopes

of Senlac Hill, beyond Battle Abbey, where on that day, 948 years ago, the Saxon army of Harold Godwinson was put to the sword.

Battle, full of good cafés and pubs, with Mrs Burton's Tea Rooms next door to the Abbey a cosy place for a snack or a coffee, is a fine embarkation point for more exploration of the Weald. Notice, though, how the lie of the land has changed – rolling hills and fields threaded by networks of thick hedgerows signify you're in the High Weald. The conker-coloured cattle you'll often see at pasture in these parts are the Sussex breed, small but so strong they were once used as oxen for the plough.

But mostly you'll notice trees. There's no woodier part of England and timber is evident in the pretty shutter-boarded buildings of villages, as at Winchelsea and,

over the Kent border, in the half-timbered delights of Cranbrook, Goudhurst – also distinguished by old oast houses, now converted to dwellings, but a legacy from the area's hop-growing past – and Sissinghurst. Fine gardens with exotic trees and shrubs rejoice in the warm southern temperatures – Sissinghurst and Great Dixter, to name only a few – as well as the spectacular conifers of Bedgebury National Pinetum.

Gothic rocks

For distant prospects, head for Ashdown Forest, a heathy spot forever home to Winnie the Pooh and pals – the views from here always stir my imagination. Yet, for me, some of the High Weald's most striking features are the outcrops of sandstone in the area around Tunbridge Wells. Eridge Rocks, on the Kent border, zigzag their way for 50 metres, at times rising to a menacing, sheer-faced 10-metres high. In the 19th century, they were quite an attraction for Victorians in pursuit of a "gothic spectacle". Today they are protected by the Sussex Wildlife Trust (though they are actually in Kent) for their rare moss and liverwort populations, but I go there for the sense of awe.

Overall, though, the Weald is a mellow, comforting, sepia-tinged sort of place. For Kipling, holing up at Bateman's Burwash, a literary haunt no one should miss, it truly was a retreat from the crowds. Like Belloc, he lost a son in the First World War. The softness of the Weald was balm for their grief, melancholia, and nostalgic reverie for a bygone time. Too much reverie is bad for you, but I can never get enough of the Weald. ☺

The Weald: a paradise regained, or future oil field?

The Weald has been among those considered a possible source of gas and oil though hydraulic fracturing. This process, known as fracking, involves using high-pressure fluids to fracture rock, allowing previously trapped gas or oil to be extracted.

Environmentalists argue that fracking causes pollution and can even prompt earthquakes – but energy companies say fracking can be done safely and responsibly.

Fracking in the Weald hit the news last summer when UK energy company Cuadrilla was granted a licence to drill at Balcombe in the High Weald. Soon after, dozens of anti-fracking protesters were arrested at Balcombe, including Green Party MP Caroline Lucas.

So how much gas and oil actually lies under the Weald? Well, there is "unlikely to be any shale gas potential", according to a long-awaited British Geological Survey (BGS) report published in May.

But what about oil? The same BGS report made headlines with its "reasonable estimate" that 4.4 billion barrels of oil might lie under the Weald.

That sounds a lot, but getting to the oil could be extremely tricky and expensive because of the geological conditions in the Weald.

These findings appear to have reassured officials at the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, charged with conserving the countryside.

In its recent response to the BGS report, the AONB Unit felt confident enough to declare fracking for gas "highly unlikely" in the High Weald. That left fracking for shale oil, which they thought unlikely to be viable on a large commercial scale.

Of course, developments in technology and changes in the per-barrel value of oil might affect things, but for the time being, at least, it seems the Weald will remain largely unchanged.



A drilling rig stands idle at Balcombe, West Sussex



ABOVE Sissinghurst Castle, Kent, has possibly the most famous gardens in England, originally designed by poet Vita Sackville-West and her diplomat husband Harold Nicholson **RIGHT** Cyclists enjoy a ride along a bridle path in a meadow near Winchelsea, East Sussex **BELOW** The picturesque village duck pond at Goudhurst, Kent **LEFT** Towering Scots pine trees at Bedgebury National Pinetum, Kent, which possesses the world's most complete collection of conifers on one site





My Weald

Jack Watkins writes about history and the countryside. He currently lives in north-west London but takes every opportunity he can to get back to his native Sussex downland.

My familiarity with the Low Weald dates back to schooldays, when the train would daily take us past the crumbling walls of Pevensey Castle and the sheep-grazed Levels around Norman's Bay. I loved the bleakness of the scene on rainy days and watching rising water levels in winter. Familiarity with the gentler, more comforting High Weald came later. Each has a unique appeal for me.



King of castles

B Bodiam Castle

In a region well-stocked with good-looking castles, moated Bodiam is the one to haunt your dreams. It even retains its portcullis. I first visited as a child and it still appeals to my Sir Walter Scott-inclined, romanticised taste of historic interests.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/bodiam-castle



Into the woods

E Ebernoe Common

For me there's something truly medieval about a walk through the glades here when the sun is glinting on the path ahead and, if you're lucky, cattle grazing among the trees. 'Wood pasture' is a rare sight in the 21st century. The Sussex Wildlife Trust have restored the wild-looking wood park setting, which supports a rich and varied flora.

www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk

Past times

F Weald and Downland Museum

Chichester, PO18 0EU

How they lived and work the land on the Weald – and on the Downs – all those centuries ago. If I'm feeling overworked, I come here to remind myself that, these days, we get off lightly.

www.wealddown.co.uk

01243 811363



Literary stop

A Bateman's, Burwash, TN19 7DS

Kipling lived here from 1902 up to his death in 1936 and his study looks as though he only recently departed. The house was built in the 17th century for a wealthy Wealden iron master, when the pretty village of Burwash was a centre of the industry. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/batemens

Rest easy

C Wilderness B&B

Headcorn, TN27 9JJ

This characterful old building dates from the 1600s, and Headcorn is a typically charming Wealden village replete with half-timbered Elizabethan architecture.

Prices range from £42.50

www.wildernessbandb.co.uk

01622 891757



Sleep tight

D The Bell

Ticehurst, TN5 7AS

Luxury B&B-cum-18th-century-pub on the high street. Handily situated for Burwash and other hiddenmost Wealden delights, it is located in a village whose weatherboarded buildings so typify those on the Kent-Sussex border.

Prices from £90-£145 per room

www.thebellinticehurst.com

01580 200 234



Watering hole

G The Castle Inn

Chiddingstone TN8 7AH

This olde-worlde style pub dates back to 1420 and has good traditional beers and food. The entire village is owned by the National Trust and has one of the High Weald's curious sandstone outcrops on its outskirts, called the Chiding Stone. www.castleinn-kent.co.uk

01892 870247



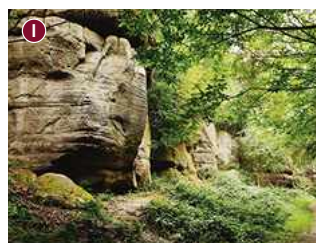
Great walks in the Weald

H Goudhurst to Cranbrook

Follow the High Weald Landscape Trail over the old trackway, which was formerly the main 'highway' over the hills between two of the most picturesque High Weald villages. The Star and Eagle pub in Goudhurst was once the haunt of smugglers, while Cranbrook's smock mill is the highest in England. Far-flung views can be found en route, as well fruit orchards old and new. (4 miles)

I Groombridge to Eridge Park

Take the Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk from Groombridge. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle loved this area's woody scenery, and it encompasses two of the Weald's striking sandstone outcrops, Harrison Rocks and Eridge Rocks, as well as Eridge Park, one of England's oldest deep parks. A good pub to fuel yourself in is the Crown Inn at Groombridge. (6 miles)



J Pevensey to Herstmonceux

Some think the Pevensey Levels are quiet. Actually they're alive with the buzz of insects and birdsong, and the ghostly breeze in the rushes. It can feel like you are being followed. Follow the 1066 Country Walk from near Pevensey Castle and you can contrast the flatness of the Low Weald with the undulations of the High Weald beyond Herstmonceux Castle. (5 miles)

Useful links

Eridge Rocks

Tunbridge Wells, TN39UJ
bit.ly/1oRsJQJ

The Countryman Inn

Countryman Lane, Shipley
www.countrymanshipley.co.uk
 01403 741383

Mrs Burton's Tea Room

2 High Street, Battle, TN330AE
www.mrsburtons.co.uk
 01424774204

The Star and Eagle Pub,

High Street, Goudhurst
 TN17 1AL
www.starandeagle.com
 01580 211512

The Crown Inn, The Green,

Groombridge TN3 9QH
thecrowngroombridge.com
 01892 864742

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Ride on Britain's most spectacular railway

Passionate public support saved the Settle to Carlisle line from closure 25 years ago. Now this glorious route offers curious travellers an enchanting way to explore the Yorkshire Dales and the North Pennines

Words: **Andrew White**



Photo: Ian Ward

It's 7:10am, and I'm standing on a station waiting for a train. And not just any train: this one runs along one of the most scenic railways in the world.

I'm not the only one waiting for this train, as 11 other people are here, too – and as the train pulls in, there are already around 35 passengers on board. The irony is that if the railway bosses had had their way 30 years ago, there would be no trains running along this line at all.

I'm spending a few days travelling between the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the Scottish border, along the Settle to Carlisle Railway, known to its friends as “the S&C”. It's a railway I've travelled on many times end to end, but I've never had the chance to stop at all the stations and explore it

properly – until now. With its 72 miles of track, 20 viaducts and 14 tunnels, it's a line built for superlatives – but it was almost never built at all.

It all came about in the 1860s, when the Midland Railway carried its passengers and freight from the south to Ingleton. Without any lines of its own northwards, onward journeys to Carlisle and Scotland had to be transferred to the trains of a rival, the London and North Western Railway (LNWR). This was a difficult relationship, and so the Midland lobbied Parliament to be allowed to build its own line northwards. Just after Parliament said yes, the two railways reached a compromise, but the Midland was obliged to build the new line anyway. So, reluctantly, the Midland created the last great mainline railway constructed in Britain. »



Crossing over Ribbleshead Viaduct on the Settle-Carlisle line is an extraordinary experience. Built between 1870-1874, the viaduct cost the lives of more than 100 navvies during its construction



Settle station



Absorbing the views

Racing green

As the diesel multiple unit pulls out of Settle station, the landscape starts to wow me already. There's always fierce debate about which is the most scenic railway route in the United Kingdom. Some might say the West Highland Line between Fort William and Mallaig in Scotland, with its Glenfinnan Viaduct made famous by the *Harry Potter* films. As beautiful as that line is, the accolade for me is definitely held by the Settle to Carlisle Railway. Perhaps that's because a large part of it runs through my home county of Yorkshire.

Soon the train is in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, and rolling green fields start to rise up from either side of the line. This is mountain country – or as much of mountains as we do in Yorkshire. And the first on the right is the distinctive profile of Pen-y-ghent – the smallest of the famous Yorkshire Three Peaks – and the one I'm walking up today.

So, I'm off the train at Horton in Ribblesdale

station, where it meets the Pennine Way, which I'm going to follow for my walk. Being a National Trail, this route is clearly signed and it's a relatively gentle ascent to the 694m summit of Pen-y-ghent. On the top, its Celtic-derived name meaning either "hill on the border" or "windy hill" seems appropriate. The descent from the rugged southern end is a tad tricky, but I'm taking it steady – no need to rush as I know there'll be a train for me back at Horton.

After that seven-mile exertion, the 11:54 is a reassuring sight. What's needed is a sit-down – but I'm struggling to find a seat. You see, this isn't a heritage railway staffed by volunteers at weekends only – it is a living, breathing line valued by locals and visitors alike. Tourists and railway enthusiasts come from all over the world to travel on the Settle-Carlisle Railway, as I found out when I shared a table with three chaps eagerly soaking up every view, signal and milepost. These three companions had travelled all the way from New York.

Timeline

1866

Parliament gives approval to the Midland Railway to build the Settle-Carlisle Railway.

1869

Parliament rejects Midland Railway's request to abandon the project. Work starts on the line.

1876

The first regular passenger train steams into Carlisle Station.

1963

The Beeching Report recommends the closure of the line to passengers.



Pen-y-ghent



Walking the Pennine Way

Awe-inspiring viaduct

Just then, the train pulls into a station with a name many more people than just railway enthusiasts will recognise – Ribbleshead. Here, there's a flurry of activity to move closer to the nearest window. Several people dive towards the doors, not to get off, but to get a good view for their cameras. And the reason for this fever? We're about to travel over the most famous structure on the line: the Ribbleshead Viaduct.

Transporting the railway 32m in the air for over 400m across Batty Moss, the Ribbleshead Viaduct is a truly staggering feat of engineering. Its construction took more than 1,000 navvies five years to complete in the 1870s. But by the mid 1980s, amid claims that maintenance of the viaduct had been purposely delayed, British Rail said it would cost around £6 million to repair the structure. In an attempt to prolong its life, one of the two lines of track was removed and a speed limit of 20mph placed on trains passing over.

But this is far from a hindrance. Look straight out of the window and the views are spectacular as you fly from one side of the valley to the other. The steady pace allows you to appreciate the complexity and brilliance of this awesome structure. And after that feeling has sunk in, it is almost as if the train is pacing itself out of respect for the many navvies who died building this railway. The death toll is unknown, but at one stage there was one death every week at this section alone.

“Ribbleshead Viaduct is a truly staggering feat of engineering”

As if the Ribbleshead Viaduct isn't enough, straight after it we enter Blea Moor Tunnel, the longest on the line at 2,404m, which passes before the moor it is named after. The tunnel is so long, you begin to wonder if you'll ever see sunlight »

Photos: Martin Gemell, Dave Willis, Alamy

1970

Stopping trains are withdrawn; all stations except Settle and Carlisle are closed.

1974

Dalesrail proposes services for walkers calling at the closed stations on summer weekends.

1984

British Rail posts closure notices along the line.

1986

Increasing passenger numbers lead to the reopening of the closed line.

1989

Transport Minister Michael Portillo refuses to allow the line to close, keeping it open.



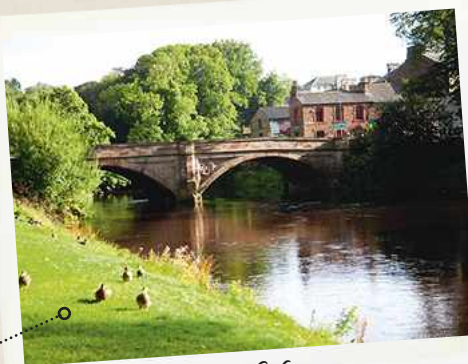
Carlisle Castle

Even before this impressive castle was built in the medieval era, this site was a Roman fortress – recognising the strategic importance of the city of Carlisle. It is now managed by English Heritage.



Long Meg and Her Daughters

Around a 50-minute walk from Langwathby station is Long Meg and Her Daughters, the third largest stone circle in England, dating back to the Bronze Age. It has a total of 58 stones, 27 of which are standing.



Appleby

After the Norman conquest, pretty Appleby became the market town of Westmorland due to its convenient position in the Eden Valley, and it remains a lovely place to potter around today.



Ribbleshead Viaduct

It's definitely worth stopping off at Ribbleshead Station for a walk around. It may be impressive from afar, but from the ground and up close it is simply staggering, as it towers over 30 metres above.



» again... but when you do, the train is ready to stop at the next station, Dent.

Resplendent Dent

Dent most certainly holds one record, and possibly two. It is definitely the highest mainline station in England at 350m above sea level. But it is possibly the furthest railway station in Britain from the village it is named after, as Dent is some four miles away and 183m lower than the station. In fact, the hamlet of Cowgill is nearer – which I'm passing through on the walk down to Dent.

Nestled in Dentdale, the village has a timeless quality to it, with its cobbled streets and stone cottages washed in many colours. The 'father of geology' Adam Sedgwick was born here in 1785, and during the 18th and 19th centuries the village became known as a major centre for hand knitting, producing gloves and hose. You feel as though you don't have to rush in Dent. There's plenty to satisfy an afternoon's browsing, including the two pubs serving locally brewed Dent Ale. On weekends between April and October, the 564A bus will take you from Dent village to Dent station, if you can't face the walk back.

As I get back on the train to go northwards for

further exploring, a freight train of unfeasible length passes, going southwards. Unlike the buses in this part of the world, this railway runs seven days a week, from early morning to the evening, providing a vital lifeline for the local communities along it, both for moving them around and for transporting tourists in. It is also a massively important freight link between Scotland and England.

This year is the 25th anniversary of the lifting of the closure threat on the line, and I travelled with a group of VIPs on a special train in April to celebrate the then minister's decision to refuse British Rail permission to close the line. That minister's name? A certain Michael Portillo. He says the line should have special glass-covered observation coaches so that people can see more of the stunning scenery. Well, after my few days exploring, even travelling on these standard trains demonstrates that the Settle to Carlisle Railway is unique. 🚂



Andrew White is a writer, broadcaster and filmmaker with a passion for walking and railways

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🌐 www.thelionsettle.co.uk

The Moorcock Inn

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☎ 01969 667488

🌐 www.moorcockinn.com

Fox & Pheasant Inn

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☎ 016974 72400

🌐 foxandpheasantinn.co.uk

Snow Hut 3

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☎ 07824 665266

🌐 www.dentstation.co.uk

Nine more great British railways

West Highland Line Fort William to Mallaig

Some people put it at the top of their list and there is certainly plenty to delight in along this journey over Glenfinnan Viaduct.

☎ 01866 938 7245 ⓘ www.scotlandrailways.com/scenicrail/the-west-highland-line

North Yorkshire Moors Railway Pickering to Whitby

The term scenic railway was probably devised for the NYMR. Reopened by a group of enthusiasts four years after it was closed by Dr Beeching, this is the busiest heritage railway in the world. Originally the northern terminus was at Grosmont, but several services now carry on to the harbour town of Whitby – winner of the *BBC Countryfile Magazine* Best Market Town award.

☎ 01751 472508 ⓘ www.nymr.co.uk

St Ives Bay Line St Erth to St Ives

Probably the shortest scenic railway in the country, this little branch line was built in 1877 to serve the fishing village of St Ives and now is the best way to arrive.

☎ 08457 484950

ⓘ www.greatscenicrailways.com/stives.html

Cumbrian Coast Line Carlisle to Barrow-in-Furness

Hugging the coast of Cumbria, this 85-mile line passes through the magnificent Western Lake District – an area still relatively ignored by tourists. From here, a detour at Ravenglass station onto the narrow-gauge Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway is always worthwhile.

☎ 08457 48 49 50 ⓘ www.cumbriancoastline.co.uk/

Welsh Highland Railway Caernarfon to Porthmadog

This railway in North Wales is without doubt the most scenic narrow-gauge railway in Britain – possibly even the world. And that's made more amazing by the fact it was rebuilt by volunteers. Change at Porthmadog to the line's sister railway, the Ffestiniog, for another scenic overload.

☎ 01766 513 402 ⓘ www.whr.co.uk

The Skye Line Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh

Made famous by Michael Palin's *Great Railways Journeys* TV programme in 1980, the Kyle of Lochalsh Line passes through some amazing landscapes. Palin called them "gloomily beautiful" and I wouldn't disagree.

☎ 0330 303 0111

ⓘ www.kylerrailway.co.uk

The Penistone Line Huddersfield to Sheffield

Traditional West Riding settlements and the stunning Pennine landscape makes this often-overlooked line a great journey. Huddersfield station is Grade 1 listed, and second only to the mighty St Pancras in grandeur. The 29-arch Penistone Viaduct and the Oxspring Tunnels are the impressive entrances to South Yorkshire – and the line's famous Music Trains are excellent.

☎ 07912 753817 ⓘ www.southpenninesrail.co.uk

Isle of Man Railway Douglas to Port Erin

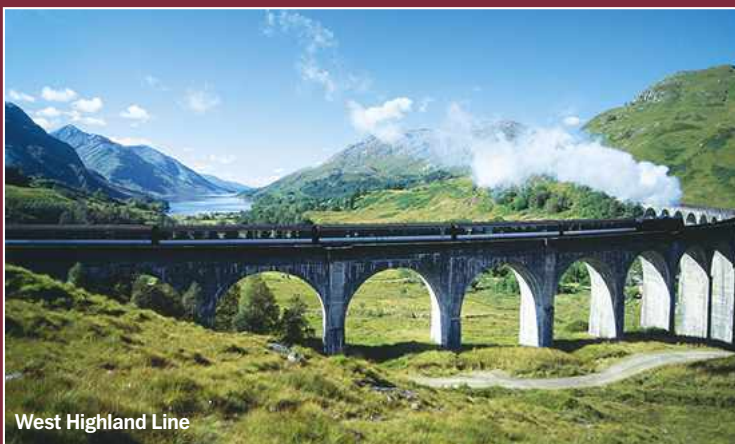
Celebrating 140 years since it opened, the line from Douglas is the longest narrow gauge railway in the British Isles, and still runs with its original locomotives and carriages through Man's unique countryside to the charming harbour of Port Erin.

☎ 01624 662525

East Coast Main Line Newcastle to Edinburgh

Amazingly, Dr Beeching recommended this line for closure in 1965. If that had happened, we would have been denied the finest high-speed train journey in Britain. Book a window seat on the coastal side of the train and marvel as the Northumbrian seaside streaks by on the way to or from Scotland.

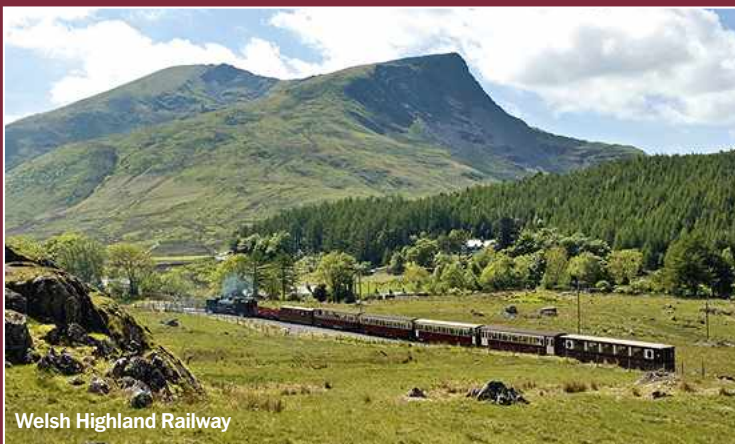
☎ 03457 225 333 ⓘ www.eastcoast.co.uk



West Highland Line



St Ives Bay Line



Welsh Highland Railway



East Coast Main Line



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SAVE OUR DISAPPEARING COUNTRY DOGS

Many traditional dog breeds are vanishing, yet they make excellent pets, says **Bruce Fogle**, so isn't it time to swap labradoodles for Dandie Dinmonts?

I have been a clinical vet for more than 40 years and I have never met an otterhound. Ever. I can count on my fingers all the Lancashire heeler, Sealyhams, Clumber spaniels, smooth collies and Dandie Dinmonts I've met. I treat more labradoodles in a week than I see Irish water spaniels, Kerry blue, Irish, Welsh, Lakeland and Skye terriers in a decade. These breeds are classified as 'vulnerable' by the Kennel Club (at risk of disappearing). But why have imported and cross-bred dogs replaced so many of our indigenous breeds?

I was raised in a house with Scottish and Yorkshire terriers. My wife Julia was raised with wire-haired fox terriers and beagles – I met her when she brought her golden retriever to see her vet (me). Our children Ben and Tamara have Labradors. We never consciously decided to live with indigenous breeds, but when the honey's so sweet at home, why go elsewhere?

New tricks for olde-worldle dogs

Rural breeds were originally bred for their practical abilities. Scotties were there to kill badgers, wildcats and weasels – all wildlife that made life hard for Scottish farmers. Fox terriers were, of course, bred to kill foxes; beagles existed for rabbit hunting and retrievers – as their name suggests – to find and fetch shot game. But what's a heeler or deerhound to do when our culture has made their traditional roles redundant?

They may have lost their original jobs but the temperaments of these rural breeds are not necessarily in conflict with what we want from our dogs today – companionship. It's simply fickle fashion that dictates which breeds are popular and which are not. Pugs and French bulldogs are the current fashion statement – the Kennel Club registers more pugs each year than golden retrievers.

Cross-breed dogs – puggles, cockapoos and labradoodles – are also in vogue. People

get them in the mistaken belief that they're healthier than their parent breeds. The first generation may be but not subsequent ones. Labradoodles have worse hip dysplasia than Labradors because while good Labrador breeders are selective about breeding to reduce hip dysplasia, labradoodle breeders are usually not (cross-breed pups often come from puppy farms in central Europe).

Rare rural breeds – pros and cons

You can help an endangered breed by keeping one as a pet, but do research its original characteristics and work with breeders to ensure the dog that joins you is medically and emotionally fit for your home. Working border collies, for example, find

“To me, maintaining Clumber spaniels around Clumber Park is as important as Exmoor ponies surviving where they evolved”

life hard as an urban pet, where all they can do is round up joggers in local parks.

One rare rural breed that easily adapts to a life of companionship is the **Dandie Dinmont**, because it has already been selectively bred for that role. I've never met a quarrelsome one and for a small dog, it has an impressively deep bark. It was bred in the Scottish Borders in the 1600s and has no serious inherited medical disorders.

The **Sealyham**, developed in the 18th century in Pembrokeshire as a badger hunter, is a small- to medium-sized dog. To find an easygoing one, it's best to go to a reputable breeder. It has short legs, so gets muddy, but from a genetic health perspective it's excellent.

The **Clumber spaniel**, a gun dog bred in Nottinghamshire for hunting in heavy cover, is gentle and loyal, although it has a high risk of inherited eye conditions. To me, maintaining Clumber spaniels around Clumber Park is as important as Exmoor ponies surviving where they evolved.

The **otterhound** is large and boisterous, with a durable coat to keep it warm for hours in water while hunting otters, but it's extremely rare. The **deerhound** is nowhere near as rare. This large, swift-moving old breed originated in Scotland in the 16th or 17th centuries. Its deep chest predisposes it to dangerous stomach rotation, however, so discuss this with your vet – is it something you want to live with?

The **Irish terrier** and **Welsh terrier**, both bred as vermin catchers and disinclined to back down from a fight with another dog, require firm handling. But with obedience training, these energetic, small to medium dogs may be the ones for you.

Finally, if some of the dogs above sound like hard work, think about a **Lancashire heeler**. This breed effectively died out but was recreated 50 years ago. Small and reactive, like Jack Russell terriers, heelers are nobly outfitted in traditional black and tan, the quintessential colours of so many of the ancient rural breeds of the UK. 🐾

FIND OUT MORE

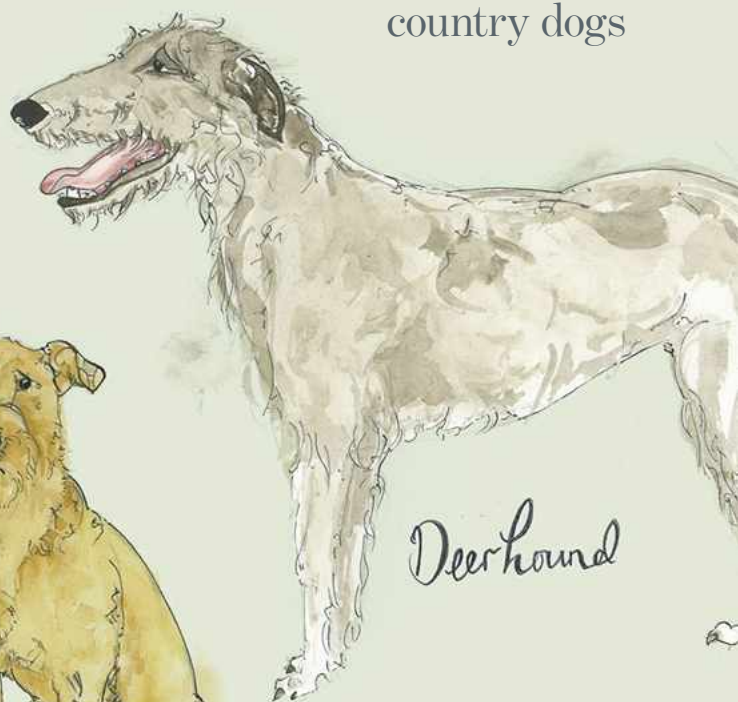
📍 www.thekennelclub.co.uk



Bruce Fogle has a veterinary practice in London and is chair of Humane Society International (protecting animals globally). He is also co-founder of Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. His son is former *Countryfile* presenter Ben Fogle.



Clumber Spaniel



Deerhound



Irish
terrier



Sealyham

Lancashire
heeler

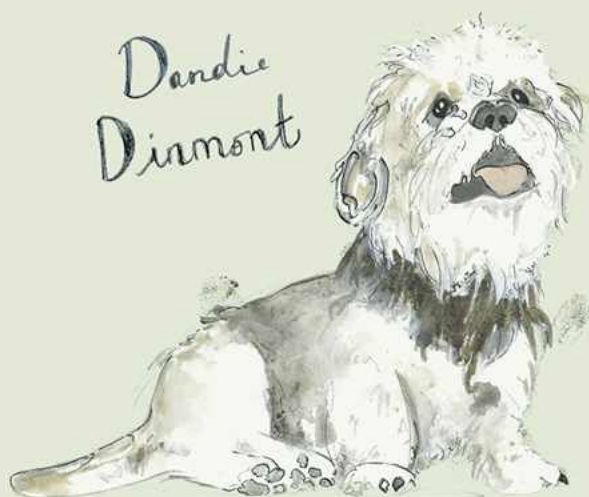


Welsh
terrier



Otterhound

Dandie
Diamont

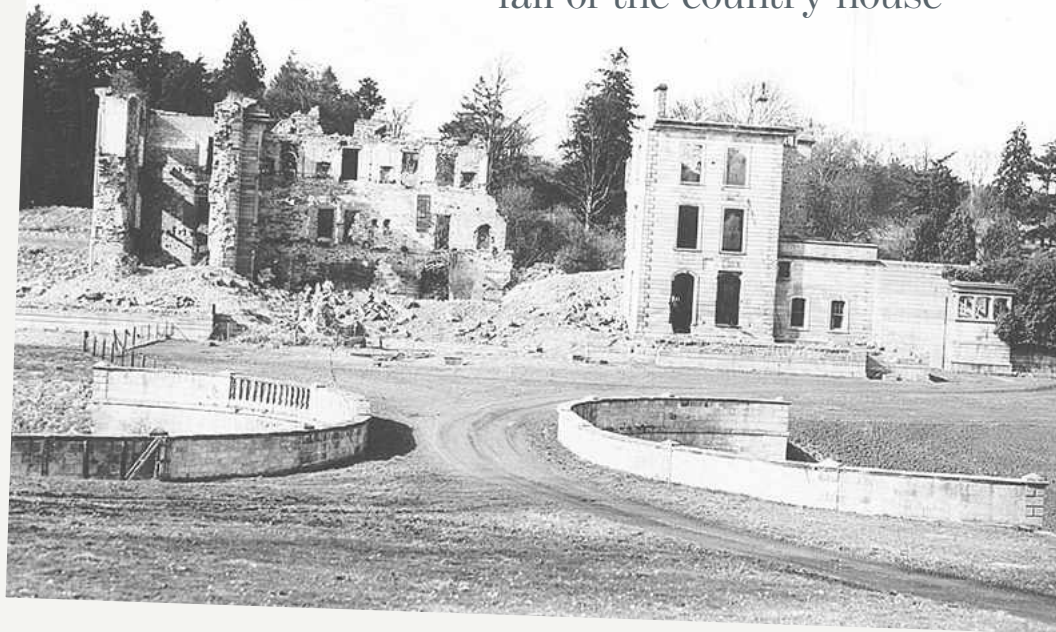


The fall of the great country house

By 1914, the future of many once grand country houses was already in doubt – then came the upheaval of the First World War.

Jeremy Musson looks at how the conflict hastened their decline





In those days... every county had 30 or 40 big houses, [each] with a staff of 30 or 40. Who would have dreamed that in my lifetime all that would pass away. We thought it would last forever." So writes former butler Bob Sharpe of the days of his youth as a gamekeeper's son in Edwardian Britain.

Back then, the owners of the 'big house' seemed to rule the world. These lucky few possessed thousands of acres of tenanted land and employed armies of estate-workers, sometimes forming the communities of entire villages.

If you lived in the country before 1914, you may have depended on the local landowner not only for your job, but also your home, a school for your children and basic medical treatment. But the First World War cut a dramatic swathe through all of this, changing lives at all levels of rural society.

'Too grand for a subject'

The Victorian era had been a boom time for the big country house. As empire and industry swelled Britain's wealth, many splendid new houses sprang up, while older houses were replaced or enlarged.

Many of these houses were lavish status symbols, designed to convey a sense of authority and power. Among the most palatial was Trentham Hall – built in the 1830s for Britain's largest landowner, the Duke of Sutherland. It was so impressive that in 1873 the visiting Shah of Persia remarked to the future King Edward VII that their host was "too grand for a subject – you'll have to have his head off when you come to the throne".

Brigades of domestic servants transformed Trentham and other country houses into complex machines designed for the comfort and prestige of the owners. Such lavish lifestyles were possible thanks to a world predicated on low tax and low wages (although, for domestic staff, there were other 'perks' that made service reasonably attractive). »



The Streatlam Castle Estate in Co Durham was sold after the First World War and in 1959 the hall was demolished (above right), a fate suffered by more than 1,000 country houses during the 20th century



TOP In 1906, the lifestyle at Cotehele in Cornwall was supported by a large domestic staff **LEFT** In the late 19th century, Kingston Lacy was hosting lavish garden parties, but by 1981 the property was in the hands of the National Trust **BELOW** Henry Hoare, the sole heir to the Stourhead estate, died after the battle of Mughar Ridge in Palestine

» Then along came the war. Four years of bloody conflict left millions dead – and accelerated the dramatic social upheaval that saw many country houses shut up and abandoned by the 1950s.

Moment of truth

Ironically, the First World War was in some ways a golden hour for landowners, with their long military traditions and training for leadership.

Many servants and estate staff joined up willingly, eager to “do their bit” (some encouraged by their employers, some not). One MP from Sussex, Gerald Courthorpe, joined up with 15 of his estate workers. Gamekeepers were recruited for their skills in stalking and shooting (many from the Highland estates were banded together in the famous Lovatt Scouts).

Brodsworth Hall in Yorkshire supplied a typical cross-section: at least 10 men from among the house and estate staff enlisted in 1914; others joined up in 1915 or were conscripted in 1916.

The statistics of those who died in the war are staggering for all classes: of the six million who served, more than 720,000 died

– around one in eight. Estate clerk Allan Simpson was among four from Brodsworth Hall who did not come home. He died on the first day of the battle of the Somme in 1916.

Officers were killed at an even more astonishing rate: among British and Irish peers and their sons who served in the war, one in five was killed. One such was Captain “Harry” Henry Colt Arthur Hoare, of the Queen’s Own Dorset Yeomanry, who died of his wounds after the battle of Mughar Ridge on 13 November, 1917. His death was to affect the fate of one of Britain’s great estates, of which more below.

As the casualties mounted and the British Army grew in size, so the numbers serving at country houses diminished. By 1916, Brodsworth was suffering from a serious shortage of staff, due to key people such as the head gardener, head gamekeeper and butler having gone to the front. As the *Livestock Journal* observed: “Like all other estate owners, the labour problem... has presented itself in acute form at Brodsworth... Quite a large number of the little army of men who find employment on the Brodsworth estate are now serving their king and country.”

It was a problem that never really went away for the great country houses, and in the interwar years, economic uncertainty, taxation and inflation all meant that landowners could no longer afford to employ these small armies of servants.





A group of gardeners at Erddig Hall, Wrexham, now a National Trust property. Country houses lost their labour as men were sent to the front

Demolition days

The First World War put an extraordinary strain on the world of the country house, but the factors that brought about the sales of houses and the break-up of so many estates, from the end of the war until the 1950s, had already gathered like storm clouds before war broke out.

Agricultural depression from the 1870s greatly reduced the value of the rents paid to landowners by their tenants (in some estates dropping by a half or two thirds).

Most significant of all was the new taxation on inherited capital in 1894 – known then as death duties – at first set at 8% on estates worth more than £1 million. These developments accounted in part for the loss of some country houses before the First World War: Trentham Hall, for instance, was partly demolished as early as 1912, though its magnificent gardens survive (www.trentham.co.uk).

Death duties rose quickly during the war; peace then placed its own demands on the Exchequer. By 1919, death duties had reached 40% on estates worth more than £2 million – and by 1940, it was 65%. Many houses were sold or demolished simply because that reduced the value of the estate, and hence the amount payable in death duties. (Many landowners had more than one country house.) By the end of the 20th century, more than 1,000 English country houses had been demolished.

Changed forever

Castle Drogo

Edwin Lutyens began building this vast, romantic country pile in Devon for Julius Drewe in 1910. It contains a room dedicated to Drewe's eldest son, who died at the front in 1917. The estate passed to a surviving brother and then his son but was later given to the National Trust.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/castle-drogo

Gwydir Castle, Wales

Built around 1490, the castle was extended in the 1540s and 1590s. Sir Charles Barry designed further additions to it in the 1820s. It was the principal seat of the Marquess of Lincolnshire, who lost his only son at the

battle of Ypres in 1915. The loss left him a broken man and he sold the estate. Much of the house's panelling was stripped in 1920 and sent to the United States. It has recently been restored by its current owners the Welfords. www.gwydircastle.co.uk

Stowe House, Buckinghamshire

Richard Morgan-Grenville (grandson of the 3rd Duke of Buckingham) ran the Stowe estate from 1908, but was killed at the front just before Christmas 1914. His clergyman brother inherited the estate but was unable to cope with its massive debts, so sold it all in 1921. It became a school in 1923.

www.stowe.co.uk/house/preservation-trust



Castle Drogo



Gwydir Castle



TOP The last private owner of Brodsworth Hall in South Yorkshire struggled to keep the building in sound repair. English heritage took over in 1988
ABOVE Chauffeur George Raper wears his military uniform at his wedding to Brodsworth's cook, Martha Lockey, in 1916

» Land change

Some country houses were swept away with another social earthquake prompted

by the end of the war. Between 1919 and 1921, about a quarter of the land in England and Wales changed hands – the most radical shift of land ownership since the dissolution of the monasteries.

A brief postwar land price boom after years of depression had encouraged many large landowners to sell, often to their former tenant farmers. In cases where the lands had been dispersed, there was often no need for the house any more. The Earl of Strathmore's Streatlam Castle estate in County Durham was sold in 1922 for £100,000. While the family retained other properties, including their estate at Glamis Castle in Scotland, the Streatlam Castle lands were divided and the house stripped.

Some landowners held on to their houses by selling off outlying lands and art. Every county has some of these reduced estates now, usually in trust and open to the public, but still lived in by the families who built them or owned them for centuries. Other properties became institutions, schools, hotels or were divided into flats.

Preserved for the public

When peace came to Brodsworth, many of its estate workers returned, but life was never quite the same again. Brodsworth's old squire Thellusson died in 1919 and the estate began a long decline,

passing through each of his four childless sons and finally to his nephew, a First World War flying ace. The latter's widow battled along in the house with unheated rooms, leaking roofs and virtually no staff from the 1950s until her death in the 1980s. It is now preserved by English Heritage in its part-threadbare state, as a monument to the decline of the country house world in the 20th century: a decline made all the more obvious by the departure of the skilled servants required to keep it running, first to the trenches and then to other careers.

Other houses were more directly affected by war losses. The aforementioned Captain 'Harry' Hoare had been sole heir to Stourhead House and Gardens; with no heir apparent, his father Henry Hoare eventually gave the property to the National Trust in 1946.

Brodsworth and Stourhead are in some ways therefore memorials to all those brave young men, and to a world that changed dramatically in the mid-20th century. These changes left the great country houses, and the tightly knit rural communities that had supported and surrounded them, quite different places from the ones recalled so vividly by butler Bob Sharpe. ☞



Jeremy Musson is a historian of the English country house and the author of several books, including *Up and Down Stairs: the History of the Country House Servant*. Born in London in 1965, he lives in Cambridge.

Lost treasures

Panshanger, Hertfordshire

This romantic Gothic house was inherited by Lady Desborough in 1905. Her eldest son, Julian Grenfell, was killed in action in 1915; his brother, Gerald was killed two months later; and a third son, Ivo, died in 1926 in a car accident. Lady Desborough never really recovered and after her death, in 1952, the estate was sold in lots by auction and the house demolished in 1954.

Thirkleby Hall, Yorkshire

Neo-Classical Thirkleby Hall was designed by James Wyatt for Sir Thomas Frankland-Russell and completed in 1799. The house and estate passed eventually to Sir Ralph Frankland-Payne-

Gallwey, who was a famous sportsman and writer on shooting. His eldest son was killed in the First World War, the estate sold by auction and the house demolished in 1927.

Witley Court, Worcestershire

Now a romantic ruin, Witley Court in Great Witley, was once a palatial mansion. The home of the coal-and-iron rich Earls of Dudley was sold off in 1920 to avoid increased taxation after the First World War. Following a disastrous fire in 1937, Witley Court was stripped of much of the surviving materials and remains as a ruin managed by English Heritage. www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/witley-court-and-garden

THE COUNTRY HOUSE AT WAR: WHERE TO LEARN MORE

- The National Trust is marking the centenary with events and activities around England and Wales. www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- English Heritage is holding a series of events explaining how the First World War affected its properties. bit.ly/1nEG8dR
- The Historic Houses Association is running a series of 'wartime trails' at heritage properties around the UK. bit.ly/1yBP4Jm



Witley Court survives as a romantic ruin surrounded by manicured parkland

Photos: Alamy, English Heritage

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Countryfile news

JOHN CRAVEN

FOOD AND FARMING

The growing case for organic food

Is organic food better for us or is it a waste of money? Just how safe is an insecticide already blamed for wiping out bees and now farmland birds? These two key issues about the way we farm have been subject to new scientific analysis. And I've ended up (as is often the case with research findings) being more confused than ever.

For as long as I have been involved with the countryside, the organic movement has tried to escape from the image of being a sandal-clad, elitist niche in the food market. Now, to its great joy, comes a report from Newcastle University, which says that a switch to eating organic produce – and food made from it – would provide extra antioxidants equivalent to eating one or two more portions of fruit and veg a day.

Antioxidants have been credited with helping to reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer, and to reach its verdict, the university team analysed 343 studies across the world to look into the differences between organic and conventional crops. Prof Carlo Leifert, who headed the team, declared: "It demonstrates that

choosing food according to organic standards can lead to increased intake of nutritionally desirable antioxidants and reduce exposure to heavy toxic metals."

Helen Browning, chief executive of the Soil Association, says of the study: "The crucially important thing about this research is that it shatters the myth that how we farm does not affect the quality of the food we eat. We know that people choose organic food because they believe it is better for them as well as for wildlife, animal welfare and the environment – and this research backs up what people think."

Organic objections

But hang on a minute! Doesn't that fly in the face of a much-publicised report five years ago by the Food Standards Agency that said organic was no better for us than any other kind of food? Prof John Krebs, who led that investigation, says of the new report: "It doesn't shift the balance significantly in favour of saying organic food is better for your health. I think if you're buying it on the basis that it makes you healthier – and you



The UK's crop pollination via honeybees is the **second lowest** in Europe, due to the severe decline of the insect

(study by University of Reading, January 2014)

are paying a premium for that – then you are still wasting your money."

Other scientists have labelled the Newcastle findings "misleading" and its public health significance "worryingly overstated". Professor Tom Sanders of King's College London says: "This study provides no evidence to change my view that there are no meaningful nutritional differences between conventional produce and organic crops."

What to believe?

It's all rather baffling to us with shopping baskets, but personal beliefs do come into play and in the end "you pays your money and you takes your choice". But birds and bees don't have a choice when searching for food. Five years ago, I reported on concerns that neonicotinoids, one of the world's most widely used forms of insecticide, were a danger to bees. The manufacturers denied this and the UK government has taken no action, although the rest of the EU imposed a two-year ban on three types of neonicotinoids so assessment can be made.

Now comes Dutch research that claims a neonicotinoid is killing off the insects that birds such as tree sparrows, starlings and swallows rely on for food. Scientists involved with the insecticide dismiss the report as implausible while conservationists believe it is convincing and are demanding action. Here we go again!

Watch John on *Countryfile* every Sunday evening on BBC One.



Have your say...

What do you think about the issues raised here? Write to the address on page 80 or email editor@countryfile.com



LEFT A major claimed benefit of organic food is that it contains little or no pesticides

Photo: Alamy

Behind the headlines:

Climate change and farming

by Mark Rowe

CONTEXT

The first half of 2014 has witnessed extraordinary weather in the UK. The wettest winter since 1766 saw many regions flooded, while May was the warmest on record. Now the Met Office says there is a 25% chance the summer will be one of the hottest ever. So is climate change driving this erratic weather? And what will it mean for the countryside and our farmers?



Flooding can destroy a farmer's crop – and such events are set to increase in frequency

IS CLIMATE CHANGE BEHIND EXTREME WEATHER SEEN THIS YEAR?

“It’s impossible to attribute any one single event to climate change, but we’ve had a run of very peculiar and extreme weather. If you look over 40 years, it’s clear our weather is developing in the way that scientists forecasted. It’s much less predictable, and unusual events are happening more often than we would expect.”



Steve Trotter, director of the Wildlife Trusts in England

“This year has actually been quite benign for farmers. Despite the floods [in the Somerset levels] elsewhere it hasn’t actually been that wet. But that’s different from looking at longer periods. We’ve had six or seven of the wettest summers and some of the hottest ones too – and a lot of farmers feel the climate is changing.”



Ben Brigg, news editor, Farmers Guardian

“You can’t attribute one year’s weather solely to climate change. It’s too small a period, you need to look at climate change in terms of decades. But the sort of things we saw in winter – changes in the jet stream – are the sort of things we would expect to see with climate change.”



Met Office spokesperson

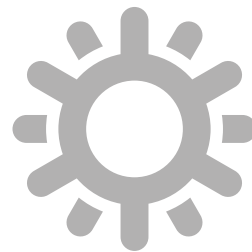
“We don’t think you can read too much into this year’s weather. We’ve had a few wet ones, and now it’s summer. It’s just typical weather, a normal summer, business as usual.”



National Farmers Union spokesperson



Climate change is forecast to bring the UK more extremes of weather, according to new research led by the Met Office in collaboration with Newcastle University. The UK is expected to see milder, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers more frequently in the future. We asked the experts what impacts this might have on farming and rural life in the UK...



HOW MIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECT FARMING?

NEGATIVES



MORE DISEASES

"With fewer frosts and warmer temperatures we are seeing more insects and diseases coming in, such as bluetongue. For example, wheat farmers have been struggling this year with septoria [a fungal disease]," says Cerys Jones, the NFU's climate change advisor.



HIGHER FEEDING COSTS

"Long periods of wet weather has meant livestock must be kept indoors more frequently. This often means farmers must buy in more feed – and the silage they produce is of poor quality," says Ben Briggs of the *Farmers Guardian*.



DISRUPTION

"If extreme events happen with more frequency before you have time to recover, it may change a farmer's view of how they do things," says Cerys Jones, NFU. Defra has warned that the forestry industry could see timber yield and quality reduced by drier weather.

POSITIVES



LONGER GROWING SEASON

"Climate change is seeing warmer winter and night-time temperatures. If we have fewer frosts, you may see farmers getting four or five lettuce crops rather than three. But that might mean fruit blossom coming out earlier and then being hit by a sudden frost," says the NFU's Jones.



INCREASED YIELDS

Defra's 2012 report on climate change suggested the UK farming sector could benefit from increased yields for current crops such as wheat, sugar beet and potatoes, as well as better grass yields for feeding livestock.



FARMING HEADING NORTH

"Maize is seen as a warm weather crop, but we see it now gradually being planted further north," explains Jones. Crops such as sunflowers and soya might start appearing in the south of the UK.

Side effects of climate change



INSURANCE PREMIUMS GO UP

The flooding of 2012 alone caused £400 million worth of damage and raised the spectre that many homes may no longer be insurable. The Association of British Insurers is working with the Government to develop a not-for-profit flood fund to ensure that insurance remains affordable and available to homeowners at high-flood risk.



HEALTH ISSUES

The Met Office says that, if nothing is done to combat climate change, the extreme heat wave of 2003, which killed 10,000s of people across Europe, will be the feature of a typical summer by the 2040s. Public Health England predicts that extreme weather will see a rise in related mental health issues and increase in problems with allergens.

Visit countryfile.com for more information on how climate change might affect Britain's wildlife

5%

The amount UK food prices went up in 2010 as a result of the heat wave in Russia that damaged the wheat harvest, creating a shortage of this commodity on a global scale. The UK may be vulnerable to such increases because it imports around 40% of its food.



Have your say

What do you think about these issues? Contact us on editor@countryfile.com or by writing to the address on page 80.



What's so cool about birds?

Birdgirl – also known as 12-year-old **Mya-Rose** from Somerset – tells us why birding is brilliant fun for children and adults alike

Words: Ben Hoare Photos: Oliver Edwards



Ask someone what a birder looks like and they will probably describe a bearded fruitcake wearing an unflattering anorak. As a caricature, it's woefully out of date – Britain has more birdwatchers than any other European country, so birding is hardly an eccentric pursuit nowadays, and the RSPB has more women than men as members – but the cliché persists nonetheless.

Few people do more to challenge the tired stereotype than 'Birdgirl', a trendy 12-year-old who is mad keen on birds and writes a blog about her hobby. "I'm not a tomboy," she asserts firmly when we meet. "I do girly things like dance but I also enjoy watching birds." After a pause, she adds: "Birds are wonderful! Firstly, they can fly. Every child has dreamed at some point about flying. And the other day, I learned that they're descended from dinosaurs, which is cool."

We're sitting beside Chew Valley Lake in Somerset, a picturesque reservoir not far from the Mendip village where Birdgirl – real name Mya-Rose – lives with her parents Chris and Helena. "It's my local patch," she explains, eagerly pointing out its avian residents, from great-crested grebes – "I love the mating dances they do" – to a pair of Egyptian

geese: "Dad says they don't really belong in this country, but I like them anyway."

Birding is open to all

"What's great about birding is anyone can do it," says Mya-Rose. "You don't need lots of spare time, because you can spot birds everywhere, even just by looking out of the window. Begin by watching the birds in your garden and put up a birdfeeder and some nestboxes. Learn the common species first.

"Then get yourself a local patch. Mine is this lake, but it could be a wood or a park. You'll be amazed how much you see if you keep going to the same place – every day is different. You notice different species in each season, too."

It's not hard to see where Mya-Rose's passion comes from – her parents and older sister Ayesha are dedicated birders. "Mum first went birdwatching with me when I was, like, nine days old," says Mya- »

ABOVE Birdgirl Mya-Rose (above centre and opposite) has been bird-spotting since she was a small child, and is now training to catch and ring birds with the Chew Valley Ringing Station

“Birds are wonderful. First, they can fly. Every child has dreamed about being able to fly”



LEFT Mya-Rose gets to grips with ringing a song thrush and a great tit for research purposes



CLUBS AND SOCIETIES FOR JUNIOR BIRDERS

• RSPB Wildlife Explorers

A club for young people, with 216,000 members and a network of youth groups.

www.rspb.org.uk/youth

• Wildlife Watch

The junior branch of the Wildlife Trusts, with 150,000 members and 240 children's nature clubs around the UK.

www.wildlifewatch.org.uk

- If there's no birdwatching club near you, why not persuade a science teacher at your school to start one? The RSPB organises Wildlife Action Awards for schools to take part in.

- Many nature reserves and natural-history museums organise family activities at weekends and during school holidays.

» Rose, laughing. So far her favourite destination is Shetland, home to huge seabird colonies in summer, including thousands of puffins and Arctic terns. But what about children whose parents don't know so much about birds – how do they get started?

"Their parents or school should take them to a nature reserve. Birdwatching hides used to be dark, small and cobwebby, didn't they? People say you just sat there and got bored. Now reserves have large, bright visitor centres that do activities and crafts. It's all changed." Mya-Rose could equally well have mentioned the nature trails, cafes, binoculars and bicycles for hire, clean loos...

Children should feel welcome

I tell Mya-Rose that when I was her age in the early 1980s, if I went in a hide, the adults there would often turn round, frown and make hushing noises, before I'd even sat down and lifted up my binoculars. "God, that's rubbish," says Mya-Rose, rolling her eyes. "Nature is for kids as well."

"When I meet other birdwatchers who are grown-ups, they are usually really nice to me. They let me look through their 'scopes. Sometimes after a while

they forget I'm little and one might make a rude joke, but then they go: 'Oops, can't say that, we've got children with us.'"

Does she go birding with children her own age? "Sometimes. For my seventh birthday party, I went to the reserve at Slimbridge with a minibus of friends. And now at Guides we're doing the RSPB badge. For the bird section we learned all about bird identification and bird songs, and in July we had an evening walk in the forest to listen for nightjars. Last winter, we built some birdfeeders for the Big Garden Birdwatch survey."

Have fun and do more stuff!

In many ways, there are more avenues for young people interested in wildlife than there were 30 years ago (to be honest, I'm slightly envious). Not only is Mya-Rose training to catch and ring birds for research with the Chew Valley Ringing Station, she's also joined a local club called Young Wardens, which organises talks and hands-on conservation work.

But the problem is that many children are increasingly spending more time indoors, glued to computers, tablets and TVs, rather than actively engaging with nature. Dubbed 'nature-deficit disorder', it is a worrying phenomenon with no easy solutions. I ask Mya-Rose what she thinks.

"You should make birding fun," she says. "Steve Backshall was my idol when I was younger. I went to see him talk at an event and his advice was: 'Do more stuff!' So let's have fun. Go on a wildlife treasure hunt. Don't just look for birds – search for

dragonflies and other wildlife as well. We recently did a 'bioblitz' in our back garden, trying to record as many species as possible. Once I kept a year list as a challenge, to see how many birds I could spot in one year."

Ah, lists. Isn't list-keeping a male thing,

which is why birdwatching has tended to appeal more to boys? Mya-Rose shakes her head. "Girls are sooo competitive. Actually I think it's boys who are the ones that normally can't be bothered to go outdoors and see and find things. But, urgh, don't get me started on spiders. I can't stand spiders." ☹

“Birdwatching hides used to be dark, small and cobwebby, didn't they? Now it's all changed”

Ben Hoare is features editor at *BBC Wildlife Magazine*

- How do you get started in bird-watching? For Mya-Rose's guide, see www.countryfile.com
- Read Mya-Rose's blog at <http://birdgirluk.blogspot.co.uk>



Mya-Rose's guide to Britain's amazing birds

Best flier - swift
 "When the young birds leave their nest under the eaves of a building, they may stay airborne for two or three years before they next land, when they return to breed."



Mya-Rose's favourite - Kingfisher
 "For all the usual reasons. I love its plumage, incredible bill shape and great fishing skills."

Most aggressive - blue tit
 "People who have never held these garden birds probably think that their small, dainty bills can't hurt at all. Wrong. They have a habit of biting the tender bits on your fingers and are extremely aggressive for a bird of their size."



Tallest - common crane
 "A whopping four feet tall. Cranes used to live here in the Middle Ages but were hunted out. Then a small breeding population appeared in Norfolk, and since 2009 there has been a captive-breeding programme at WWT Slimbridge. Some of those cranes have been released onto the Somerset Levels. It is an amazing success story."



Smallest - goldcrest
 "It's really amazing because it is so tiny you could almost mistake it for a butterfly. If you look carefully, you will see a golden stripe on its head."



Strangest call - bittern
 "The male bittern's call in spring sounds like a distant foghorn, as if someone is blowing over the top of an empty bottle. Male eider ducks have the funniest calls, cooing to females as if they are going 'oooh!' all the time."



Most interesting adaptation - feathers

"Like most birders, I have a little collection of feathers that I have found. They are really fascinating because they are so smooth, with individual patterns on them. Each one is different. It is great to try to work out what species a feather is from, particularly if it is one you don't already have a feather for."



A county to die for...

As the first new Poirot mystery for nearly 40 years is published, **Ben Lerwill** explores the gorgeous Devon landscapes that inspired the Queen of Crime – and the world's best-selling novelist – Agatha Christie



Criminals and coves: Bayard's Cove Fort and the River Dart estuary in Dartmouth provided inspiration for Christie's work



Devon: a dreamy land of cream teas, quiet coves and murder in cold blood. It's not a slogan you see being employed by the tourist board, but travel the county through the eyes of the world's best-selling author and you'll encounter felony in the hills, subterfuge on the beaches

and iniquitous ruses on the English Riviera. Bodies, you'll notice, have a tendency to drop like flies. All things considered for us visitors, it's fortunate that the razor-sharp detective skills of the likes of Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple are so often without flaw.

No fewer than 15 of Dame Agatha Christie's murder mysteries are set in, or otherwise linked to, Devon. The irony, of course, is that in basing so many of her crime novels in the county, the writer was actually paying it the fondest of tributes. "One of the luckiest things that can happen to you in life is to have a happy childhood," she wrote in her autobiography. "I had a very happy childhood." She was born here, spent much of her youth in and around Torquay and grew so attached to the South Hams countryside that she went on to call it home for the majority of her life.

Born Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller in 1890, she passed the best part of three decades living in the family home of Ashfield, a now-demolished mansion on the fringes of Torquay (the spot where it stood remains marked by a blue plaque). As a young lady she enjoyed rollerskating on the pier, bathing on local beaches and, naturally enough, experimenting with short stories. Later, in 1938, she moved with second husband Max Mallowan to Greenway, a large Georgian house in Brixham sitting high and handsome above the River Dart. She described it as "the loveliest place in the world".

As any reader of her novels can attest, she also had an eye for exotic lands. But despite her numerous overseas journeys – including visits to France and, famously, travels to Egypt and the Middle East on archaeological trips with Mallowan – her heart remained in the West Country. As a writer, her output of two to three novels a year was prodigious, and Devon provided her with rich subject matter. She knew its railways and its hotels, its bays and its villages, its winter secrets and its summer finery. How lucky she was.





1. Greenway

Now owned by the National Trust, the grand riverside house of Greenway sits just outside the village of Galmpton. The richly decorated interiors have been preserved much as they were when Christie lived here, complete with Steinway piano, writing desk and champagne magnums. The mansion was requisitioned by American troops during the war and a vivid officer-painted mural still adorns one room. Its gardens, too, are a treat to wander. "So many paths... and trees, trees everywhere," says Hercule Poirot in *Dead Man's Folly*, talking about the extensive grounds that lead down to Greenway's boathouse, where – in the same novel – local girl guide Marlene Tucker is found strangled with a clothesline.

📍 www.nationaltrust.org.uk/greenway ☎ 01803 842382

2. Broadsands & Elberry Cove

Two of South Devon's most picturesque beaches, Broadsands and Elberry Cove, are separated only by a grassy headland. They're different in character – Broadsands is, as its name suggests, wide and sandy, while lesser-known Elberry Cove is shingled although no less beautiful – but both were regularly visited by the Queen of Crime on her bathing excursions. Broadsands these days hosts the Agatha Christie One Mile Sea Swim each September, a fundraising event for local charities. Elberry Cove's links to the author are more pertinent still: in *The ABC Murders*, the body of art collector Sir Carmichael Clarke is discovered here, "overlooking the sea and a beach of glistening stones," having been bludgeoned to death on his evening walk in Churston. Poirot's little grey cells are very tested in this case.

📍 www.englishriviera.co.uk ☎ 01803 207975

3. Burgh Island

Like all good settings for drama, tiny Burgh Island has more than one mood. When the tide's out, its rounded green slopes remain linked to Bigbury-on-Sea Beach and the rest of the mainland by a sandy causeway. At high tide, however, it becomes a place cut off, accessible only by high-bodied "sea tractor". Its isolation made it the inspiration behind the settings of both *And Then There Were None* and *Evil Under the Sun*. Today it's best known for being home to the art deco Burgh Island Hotel, a stylish property where the guestbook includes not only Christie but Noel Coward and Winston Churchill.

📍 www.burghisland.com ☎ 01548 810514

4. Dittisham

A common trick employed by Christie was to lightly disguise Devon localities by altering their names. Galmpton, for instance, appears as 'Nassecombe' in *Dead Man's Folly*, while the Royal Castle Hotel in Dartmouth is portrayed as 'The Royal George' in *The Regatta Mystery*. The riverside village of Dittisham stars in the opening chapter of *Ordeal by Innocence* as 'Gitcham', where it sees a character ringing the hand-bell on the quay to summon a ferry. Visitors today can still employ the same method to call a boat, although you won't want to rush away from the place – far better to enjoy a pint or two at the small but perfectly formed Ferry Boat Inn.

📍 www.dittisham.org.uk

5. Paignton to Kingswear steam train

There's much to enjoy about trundling through the mellow hills of south Devon in a bluster of steam and whistles. Poirot makes the half-hour rail journey from Paignton to Kingswear at least four times in the novels and modern-day visitors can still travel

the line by steam. Calling at Goodrington, Churston and Greenway Halt – passengers can disembark here to visit Greenway – the heritage locomotive rolls through the oak-covered slopes of Long Wood before arriving at Kingswear. This features as St Looe station in the David Suchet TV adaptation of *Peril at End House*.

📍 www.dartmouthrailriver.co.uk
☎ 01803 555872







6

6. Dartmouth

There's no finer sight on a sunny Devon morning than the town of Dartmouth, its timbered quay buildings and pastel-coloured houses gazing out over the water from a hill above the Dart Estuary. The settlement's history encompasses everything from medieval crusaders to Mayflower pilgrims and in fiction it appears in three Christie novels – *Ordeal by Innocence*, *Dead Man's Folly* and *The Regatta Mystery*. The last of these sees diamond trader Isaac Pointz moor his yacht here during the Dartmouth Royal Regatta of 1939. Almost 85 years later, the town's annual late-August regatta remains a colourful time to come calling.

📍 www.discoverdartmouth.com ☎ 01803 834224

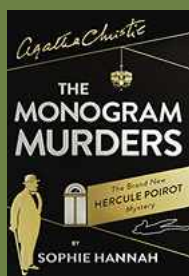
7. Imperial Hotel, Torquay

Two of Torquay's hotels have close links to Christie. The Grand Hotel is where she passed her honeymoon night in 1914, shortly before her first husband, aviator Archie Christie, returned to service in France. At the opposite end of town, the Imperial Hotel appears in *Peril at End House*, *The Body in the Library* and *Sleeping Murder* (sometimes known as 'The Majestic'). "The gardens of the hotel lay below us freely interspersed with palm trees," she writes in *Peril at End House*. "The sea was of a deep and lovely blue." It still grants a fine view across Torbay.

📍 www.thehotelcollection.co.uk/torquay ☎ 01803 294 301



7



New Poirot penned!

For the first time, the Agatha Christie estate has granted permission for another author to write a Hercules Poirot story. Authored by bestselling crime novelist Sophie Hannah, *The Monogram Murders* is published in hardback on 8 September (HarperCollins, £18.99). *The Monogram Murders* is to be launched at the International Agatha Christie Festival at Torre Abbey and other venues in Devon from 14-21 September. 0844 474 22 33 or www.englishriviera.co.uk



David Walliams stars as another Agatha Christie sleuth, Tommy Beresford, in a new series to be screened next year, on the 125th anniversary of Christie's death. The first three episodes will be an adaptation of *The Secret Adversary*.



Ben Lerwill is an award-winning travel writer who lives in Oxfordshire with his family. He has a passion for the outdoors, books, food, drink and music.

Photos: Neville Stanik, Alamy

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Perfect picnic

Delicious recipes to dine out on

Food, fresh air and fun – who doesn't relish a picnic? And there's nothing better than munching your own mouthwatering homemade snacks.

Try these easy bakes to create a very happy hamper

Words: Genevieve Taylor Photos: Jason Ingram

Think of a picnic as a small transportable party where easy-to-eat snacks will work the most successfully. So aim principally for finger food, or something that can be eaten with just a fork. Once you start to include things that need to be eaten with both a knife and a fork it can all become a bit too complicated!

The picnic fare also needs to be reasonably sturdy to withstand the journey, so try transporting food like quiches, tarts or cakes in a tin, to protect them on your way. And to keep things cool, freeze a bottle or two of water or cordial and pack it

alongside. It will defrost slowly, chilling your food as it does so, and as a bonus you get a thirst quencher when you arrive at your destination.

The party can be as casual, or as posh, as you like. Some of my most memorable picnics have involved little more than a couple of boiled eggs, a bag of crisps and a chocolate bar – but the very best picnics involve just a little more planning. Whether you are wandering along a river bank, relaxing in a wildflower meadow or sitting on a wildly gorgeous cliff top, here are a few of my favourite bakes to take on a picnic.

Smoked trout, watercress and horseradish quiche

Quiches are wonderful picnic food and here is my favourite recipe. Watercress and smoked fish are an ideal marriage of flavours, and the horseradish adds a little extra bite to liven it up a touch.

Makes a 25cm quiche, serving four to six people.

- 250g shortcrust pastry (bought or homemade).

For the filling:

- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 bag (110g) of watercress, roughly chopped
- 2 smoked trout fillets (about 125-150g), roughly flaked
- 2 tbsp horseradish sauce
- 200g creme fraiche
- 3 large eggs
- Salt & freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas 6.

Lightly dust the worktop with flour and roll out the pastry to about 3-4mm thick, to fit a 25cm loose-bottomed tart tin. Using the rolling pin to help lift the pastry off the worktop, gently line the tin, pressing well into the corners but trying not to stretch it too much. Then with a swift roll over the top of the tin, cut off the excess. Line with baking paper and baking beans, and 'blind bake' (baking without a filling) for 20 minutes. Remove the paper and beans and bake for a further five minutes.

For the filling, heat the oil in a large frying pan and very gently sweat the onion until it's soft – about 15-20 minutes. Add the watercress and cook for a few minutes. As soon as it has wilted, turn off the heat and set aside to cool.

Spread the horseradish sauce over the base of the pastry case, then spoon in the watercress mixture. Scatter the trout over the top. In a jug, beat together the eggs and creme fraiche until well combined, and season well with salt and pepper before pouring over the filling. Bake in the oven for about 20 minutes until the filling has set. Allow to cool before wrapping, ready to add to your picnic basket. »



Pack a lunch: there is little as satisfying – or likely to whip up an appetite – as a homemade picnic

perfect picnics



Tune in!

For more inspiration
about seasonal food and
drink, tune into the Food
Programme every Monday
at 3.30pm.





Freeform pork & pickle pies

These little pork pies use a hot-water crust as a sturdy shell to support the filling, which is possibly the easiest of all pastries to make – no rubbing in and trying to keep it cool as you roll. Make the night before you picnic and serve cold, just like a traditional pork pie, except these ones have their pickle inside, rather than on the edge of your plate, making them perfect for picnics. A few salad leaves and a handful of cherry tomatoes are a great accompaniment.

Makes four generous individual pies.

For the hot-water crust pastry:

- 300g plain flour
- 1 tsp fine salt
- 1 egg
- 110ml cold water
- 60g butter, diced
- 60g lard, diced

For the filling:

- 500g pork mince
- 6 rashers smoked streaky bacon, chopped
- 1 tsp dried mixed herbs
- ½ nutmeg, freshly grated
- 4 large tsp of your favourite chutney or pickle
- Salt & freshly ground black pepper

To make the pastry, mix the flour and salt in a mixing bowl, making a well in the centre. Crack the egg in the well and flick a little flour over to cover it completely. Add the water, butter and lard to a pan and set over a medium heat. Stir as the fats melt and as the water comes to the boil, tip into the mixing bowl, stirring well to form a soft ball. Tip onto the worktop and knead briefly for a minute then cut into four even pieces – this helps it cool quicker – and chill in the fridge for about 30 minutes to firm.

While the pastry is chilling, mix the pork, bacon, herbs and nutmeg in a bowl and season with salt and pepper. Tip onto the worktop and divide into four balls. Flatten each ball to a disc of around 1cm thick and spoon the chutney into the centre, before bringing up the sides to seal it completely in the middle. Set aside on a plate.

Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas 4.

Take the pastry out of the fridge and cut about a third off each, reserving to make the lid. Using your hands, flatten the larger piece to a 5mm thick disc, then set a ball of filling in the middle. Shape the smaller piece of pastry to a 5mm disc and drape over the top of the filling to create a lid. Bring up the sides of the bottom pastry to meet the lid and press together to seal the filling inside completely. Repeat with the remaining pastry and filling, making four pies. Use a skewer to pierce a large hole in the top of each to let the steam out, and sprinkle over a few sea-salt flakes and grind of pepper.

Spread on a baking sheet and cook for about an hour until the pastry is crisp and golden. Remove from the oven and allow to cool.



Stilton scones with walnut & tarragon butter

A delicious savoury take on a classic, these are best made the day you eat them (with scones, it's always a case of the fresher the better) but they do freeze very well if you want to make them in advance. The butter needs time to chill and firm, so I make this the day before.

Makes about 10

For the walnut & tarragon butter

- 75g walnut pieces
- 75g cold butter
- A small bunch tarragon, leaves picked & chopped
- Salt & freshly ground black pepper

For the scones:

- 350g self raising flour
- 40g butter, cut in 1cm cubes
- 200g stilton, crumbled
- 100ml milk
- 2 large eggs
- Pinch of salt & pepper to taste

Add the walnuts to a food processor and whizz to crumbs. Add the butter, tarragon and season with salt and pepper, then blend to a paste. Scrape on a

piece of baking paper and roll up into a cylinder, twisting the ends as you go. Chill in the fridge to firm up for at least an hour, or preferably overnight.

To make the scones, preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C/gas 6. Add the flour and butter to a food processor and pulse a few times until they resemble rough crumbs. You can also do this by hand by quickly rubbing together between your thumbs and fingers. Add most of the stilton, reserving a little for the tops, and mix through either by pulsing again in the food processor, or simply stirring through if you are making by hand.

Measure the milk in a jug then crack in the eggs, season with a little salt and pepper and lightly whisk. Pour into the flour mixture and pulse once more until the mixture comes together as a rough ball, or stir through with a metal spoon. Tip onto a lightly floured worktop and roll out into a disc of about 2cm thick. Use a 6cm round cutter to cut out as many scones as you can, laying on a baking sheet as you go, then reroll the offcuts and cut again. Dot the tops with a little of the reserved stilton, then bake in the hot oven for around 15 minutes until golden brown. »



Three picnic sandwich fillings

Sandwiches are obligatory for any great picnic basket, but I must admit I'm a very lazy sandwich maker. I much prefer to pack a selection of fillings and a crusty loaf and let people make their own concoctions. Here are a few of my favourites:

Homemade hummus Making your own is doddle and it's so much better and fresher tasting that I urge you to give it a go.

You need:

1 x 400g tin chickpeas, drained & rinsed
150g tahini (sesame paste)
2 cloves garlic, crushed
Juice of 1 lemon
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil,
Salt & pepper to taste

Add everything to a food processor and whizz to a paste. With the motor running, slowly pour in just enough cold water to form a smooth puree – about 50-75ml should do it. Scrape into a bowl and chill!

Curried egg mayonnaise My mum always made this to take on picnics when we were kids, and I still love it to this day.

You need (per person):

A hard boiled egg, peeled & mashed
A generous teaspoon of mayonnaise
A pinch or two of curry powder
Salt & pepper to taste

Simply mash everything together, season to taste and pack into a container.



And finally, a picnic essential... **cheese** and a hunk of bread. Any cheese will do, but to me the best ones are those that ooze beautifully when warm, so camembert, brie, cambazola or herby cream cheese are my favourite picks.



Apple & blackberry crumble squares

Like the best-ever fruit crumble in a cuttable, transportable bar. What's not to love?

Makes about 15 squares

- 2 medium cooking apples (about 550-600g whole weight), peeled, cored & diced
- 150g blackberries
- 2-3 tbsp granulated sugar, to taste
- 100ml water
- 200g butter, softened
- 200g light brown sugar
- 200g self raising flour
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 150g porridge oats

You also need a 20x30 cm tin, about 2cm deep, greased & lined with baking paper.

Preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas 6. Add the apple, blackberries, sugar and water to a medium pan. Cover and simmer gently until soft – about 8-10 minutes. Set aside. Whizz together the butter and sugar in a food processor until creamed. Add the flour and bicarbonate of soda and pulse until combined;

the mixture will be quite crumbly. Lastly, add the oats and pulse again until mixed.

Tip about two thirds of the crumble mix into the prepared tin and press down well with the back of a spoon. Spread the fruit all over the base evenly. Sprinkle over the remaining crumble mixture then bake for 25 minutes until the top is crisp and golden. Remove from the oven and allow to cool completely in the tin before cutting into squares. 🍴



Genevieve Taylor is a food writer and stylist. Her books include *Soup!*, *Stew!*, *Pie!* and *A Good Egg*.

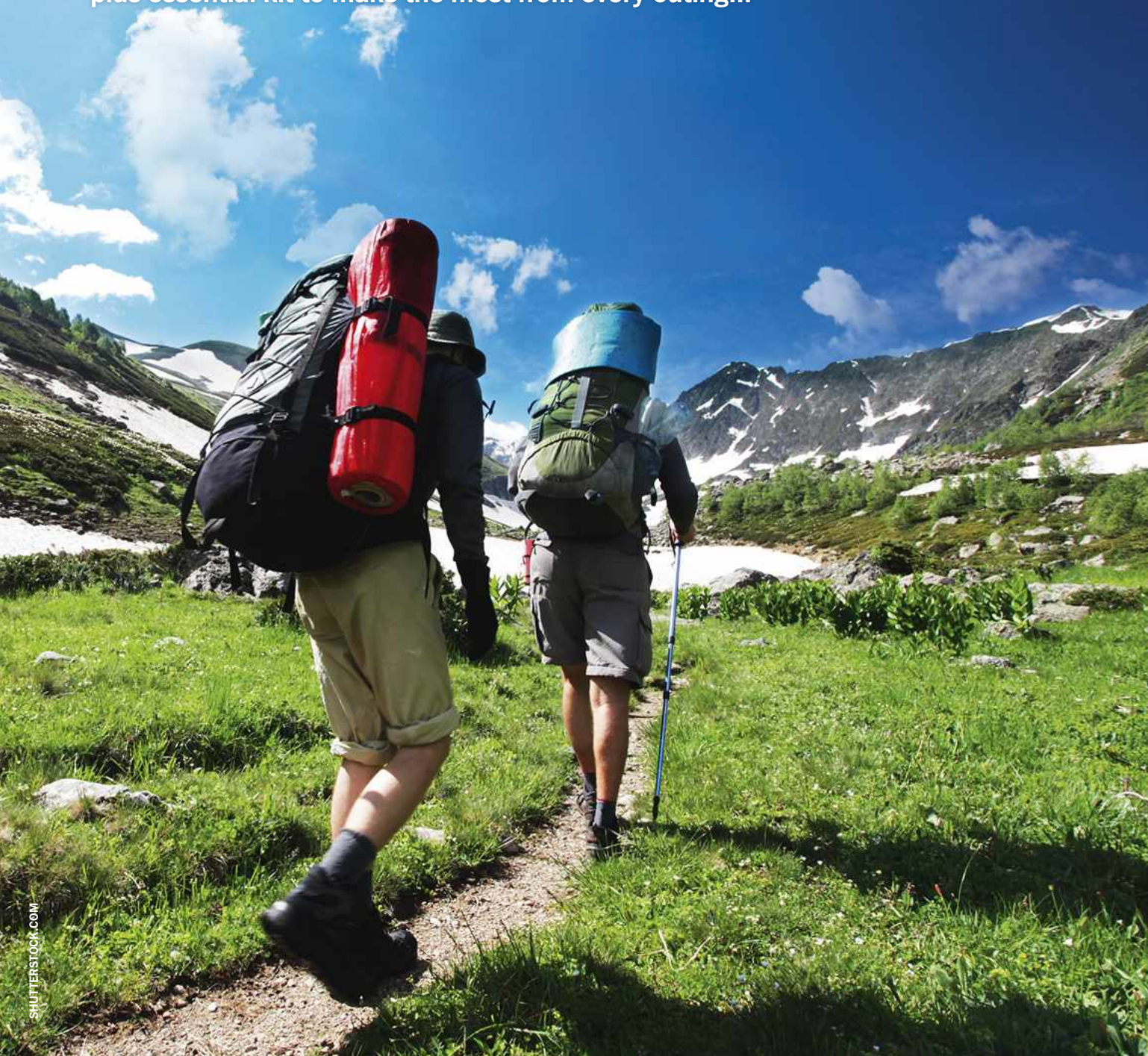


What are your favourite picnic recipes?

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WALKING essentials

Do you love exploring the countryside on foot? Turn the page for a host of inspiring ideas for walking holidays and events, plus essential kit to make the most from every outing...



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COUNTRY WALKS, CITY WALKS, OR EPIC WALKS...

If this sounds like your cup of tea then Your Walk is for you. Walk whenever and wherever you want in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. The great thing is you get to pick a route and day that suits you – country walks, city walks or epic walks, it's up to you. You can hold a walk in memory of a loved one, to celebrate their life, or simply to show your support for people affected by cancer. And by holding a sponsored walk for Macmillan, you can do something you love – walking!

YOUR WALK. YOUR WAY.

The great thing about Your Walk for Macmillan is that you can do whatever walk you'd like. It can be a walk in the countryside, or along a famous city route. Or perhaps you'd like to go the extra mile by walking John O'Groats to Land's End or take on the Three Peaks Challenge – the UK is home to walks that will really push you to the limits.

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WE'RE HERE EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Once you've signed up, we'll send you a fundraising pack crammed full of handy tips – plus a stylish green Macmillan t-shirt – to help get the donations rolling in.

HELPING TO MAKE A MASSIVE DIFFERENCE

Last year we raised an amazing £1.1 million through walking events and this year we want to do even better. Every pound makes a difference – with the money raised from sponsored walks, Macmillan is able to provide vital services to make sure fewer people face cancer alone.



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Case study: Amanda Gordon

I wanted to tell you about hosting your own walk for Macmillan. It's a fantastic way to see the great outdoors and do something great for people affected by cancer. And holding one couldn't be easier.



A DAY I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER

I held one last year to remember my dad and it was a day I'll never forget. My dad used to love walking – it's what got him back on his feet after chemotherapy. And when he died, I decided to hold a sponsored walk along his favourite route to support Macmillan, who had helped make sure that our family didn't face it alone.

HOLDING A WALK IS EASY

Holding a sponsored walk for Macmillan couldn't be easier. You can hold it whenever and wherever you like and you choose the route. I had no trouble finding people to take part in mine. Everyone was delighted to raise money for Macmillan. The walk also gave us a chance to share memories of Dad and it felt like such a fitting tribute. I know Dad would've loved it.

You can hold your walk in memory of someone or just to show your support for Macmillan. Register to host your own sponsored walk today. Get your FREE walks pack today. Text WALK2 to 70550 or visit macmillan.org.uk/yourwalk



Dogs Unite!



IS YOUR DOG A CAPED CRUSADER?

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"This is dogs helping dogs."

Dogs working together.

Dogs united."

YOU CAN BE A HERO TOO!

We want to unite dogs of all shapes and sizes all over the UK, and transform the everyday dog walk into something extraordinary.

Why not make your dog walk count and become a hero by joining a Dogs Unite event near you? If you can't find one close by, you could gather together your friends, family or colleagues for your own sponsored dog walk. It really is as easy as a walk in the park!



MAIN IMAGES: © GUIDE DOGS; TOP RIGHT: © PETE GETTINS



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The head of Ennerdale valley is rich with special places: the ridge walk from Red Pike to Seat with stunning views over Buttermere and Crummock Water; Haystacks, a hauntingly beautiful summit where Alfred Wainwright's ashes were scattered; solid Great Gable and Kirkfell backing onto Wasdale, the home of mountaineering; the challenging round of Pillar and Steeple; and all of them soaring over the iconic Black Sail Hut. But Ennerdale is excitingly unique too, a remote valley being carefully returned to the wild, and a place with no roads, no cars: a place for walkers.

An old village-centre farm and in traditional style, The Shepherd's Arms is a perfect base from which to explore Ennerdale. Over 2000 guests stay with us each year on their Coast to Coast walk, many others come to bag Wainwrights, and more simply want to spend a quiet weekend exploring this peaceful valley.

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the great indoors

book
of the
month

Helen Macdonald's memoir tells of her efforts to tame and train her goshawk while battling with bereavement



books

H is for harrowing

H IS FOR HAWK

Helen Macdonald

£14.99 hardback

Jonathan Cape

ISBN 9780224097000

There's a scene in the book where Helen Macdonald is on a nowhere Scottish quay, with £800 in her back pocket, expecting a package.

The courier arrives with the goods. No, not H for heroin but H for hawk. Of course, as anyone who has ever had a bird of prey sit on their hand knows, they are a kind of drug.

Macdonald, a Cambridge lecturer, is into hawks. As a six-year-old, she slept with her arms folded behind her in a childish impression of a raptor. So, when her beloved photographer father dies, buying a goshawk and training it is a reflexive void-filler.

In flying her goshawk, our author hunts the psychological edgeworld of wildness and domesticity; she goes 'hawk', the 'gos' becomes tamed during its tuition on the farmland outside Cambridge, itself a civilised compromise. The gos, with her 'jacked-up nervous system', kills

anything she can get her carbon-black talons into, including the gamekeeper's pheasants. Macdonald is her father's daughter; she takes photographs, but with words, brilliant ones.

H is for Helen. Truly, this memoir is less about relationship with *Accipiter gentilis*, more a field study of grief.

And grief is like a beggar. You know you should sympathise, yet you feel uncomfortable in its presence. The misery goes on: Macdonald loses her job and ends up hooked on anti-depressants.

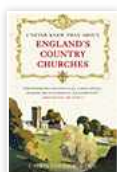
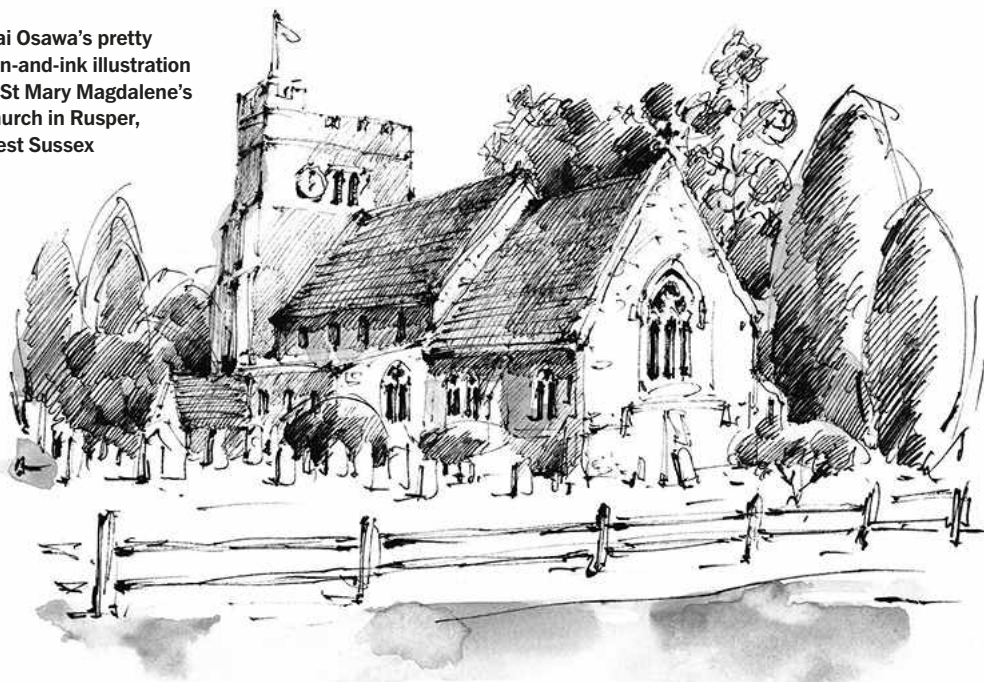
Pitiless on the reader, she

wedges in biographies of TH White, author of falconry reminiscence, *The Goshawk*. I have a copy; the mind games of the sado-masochist White chill the bookshelf.

There were times when I longed to break free from *H is for Hawk*, wished for light and air and levity, but Macdonald held me tight, just as a jess tethers a hawk. G is for good. Even if wailing in the dark is a sound you never want to hear.

John Lewis-Stempel is the author of *Meadowland: The Private Life of an English Field*, and a farmer.

Mai Osawa's pretty pen-and-ink illustration of St Mary Magdalene's Church in Rusper, West Sussex



book

I NEVER KNEW THAT ABOUT ENGLAND'S COUNTRY CHURCHES

Christopher Winn

£10.99

Ebury

ISBN 9780091945251

The *I Never Knew That* franchise has become something of a

publishing institution and living proof that arcane details in bite-sized nuggets make for an easy, engaging read on almost any theme. So it is with Christopher Winn's latest, which is on a subject we often take for granted, our parish churches.

The book is arranged in such a way that, in each county, two or more churches are given a detailed description – Winn's prose alighting here and there on facts and themes that catch his fancy – while each chapter features a round-up of brief, interesting asides on a few more churches in the same county.

There seems no end to Winn's enthusiasm for passing on the historic details. Where was the last place in Britain to be attacked by the Luftwaffe? Which church links Chaucer to Jerome K Jerome? Where is Britain's only lectern supported by a turkey?

It is details like these – along with Mai Osawa's delicate pen-and-ink drawings – that help to bring our churches to life as effectively as a much-loved but eccentric pastor, one who knows where and how to be reverent, yet still remains relevant. Utterly recommended.

Ian Vince, landscape historian

radio

PLANTS: FROM ROOTS TO RICHES

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Professor Willis says: "Britain's botanical heritage is incredibly rich in compelling tales of adventure and discovery, politics and conflict and, ultimately, our dependency on plants."

"I hope this series encourages listeners to look at plants in a new light. Our future depends on us adapting in order to live in better balance with the natural world, and plants have some of the answers to help us do that."

Part of the series will explore how social and economic preoccupations have altered our views on the green world around us and will look at our reliance on plants for food, energy and tools.

Experts from across the plant world will join Professor Willis to uncover the history and beauty of our leafy comrades.

Countryside classic



The Little Grey Men

BB

Oxford University Press

ISBN 9780192793508

"This is a story about the last gnomes in Britain. They are honest-to-goodness gnomes, none of your fairy book tinsel stuff..." declares the opening sentences. And so it is. The book begins with three supremely self-sufficient gnomes – Baldmoney, Sneezewort and Dodder – leaving their hollow oak home by the banks of a bubbling brook to find a lost

compatriot: the free-spirited Cloudberry. With a colourful cast of birds and mammals as friends and occasionally foes (most notably the feared fox) we follow their perilous journey upstream in a handmade boat, through the gamekeeper's woods and into uncharted territory.

The idiosyncrasies of the gnomes betray much of the author's personal predilections: his deep love and knowledge of nature, his admiration for hunting, fishing and living from the land and his disapproval with the fripperies of modern society. The book is ostensibly for children but enjoyable

for any age – so completely charming and beautifully detailed are the descriptions of the habits and habitats of the gnomes that the reader is inclined to believe the author spent years observing them, like Henry Williamson with otters.

The author famously used 'BB' as a nom-de-plume in his fictional works but his real name, Denys Watkins Pitchford, as the illustrator. *The Little Grey Men* won the Carnegie Medal for best children's book in 1942.

Martin Maudsley, folklorist and storyteller

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behind the scenes matt baker



Presenter Matt goes behind the scenes of Countryfile, his other TV shows and his family farm. This month: slow breathing and the sea

Having left a crazy week of *The One Show* behind, including listening to Billy Ocean singing 'our special song' [*Love Really Hurts Without You*] live to my wife and I for our tenth wedding anniversary, I found myself heading to a different ocean – the Atlantic and the Cornish coast.

As with any long journey to a *Countryfile* location, I generally go three quarters of the way there on Thursday night, leaving the London studio at around 8.30pm. In this case, I arrived in Okehampton later than expected, due to horrendous downpours on route. As summer had taken hold, I anticipated this Cornish shoot to be a dream from a weather perspective, but when I woke on Friday morning, ready to continue with the rest of the journey, the local weather reporter announced: "Although Devon and Cornwall are expecting hail this afternoon, other parts of the UK will be enjoying temperatures higher than Hawaii". Great.

Nearing our first location and bracing myself for my first-ever free-diving experience, the phone rang. The director explained that due to unexpected offshore weather, the shoot has to be moved around the coast to Newquay, so it was onward for another hour of Cornish windy roads to Fistral beach.



In the zen zone

Usually my days on *Countryfile* are pretty hectic. Filming three films in a day may not sound a lot, but in telly terms it's going some. Ask my camera crew, who I always feel the need to apologise to at the end of the day, after they've been dragged through challenges at double speed.

However, for a change, things were about to slow dramatically and I was to learn a skill that I'll remember for the rest of my life – the art of controlled breathing to slow your heart rate. What a revelation. I'm sure, as you read on, you'll be keen to try it.

Basically you put one hand on your tummy, the other on your chest and make sure that as you breathe, the only one moving is your tummy hand. Once you've mastered that, simply breathe in for four seconds and out for eight. Do this for two minutes and you'll feel like a zen warrior on a beach holiday. Once in this relaxed state, you're ready to take

'the free-diver's breath', which I'm not going to explain, as I want no responsibility if your first free-diving experience doesn't go to plan!

Free as a fish

On arrival I recorded a breath hold of a feeble 40-odd seconds. Just 10 minutes later, I was consistently over two minutes and feeling like a different person. This newfound skill allowed me to explore the reefs and seabed of the Cornish coast down to around 10 metres, totally tankless, foraging for my dinner and experiencing another world in a calm and gentle manner. That was until I peeled off my wet suit, gobbled up a sandwich in the car park and got back on the schedule. After all, due to the relocation we were well behind time...

Matt Baker grabs a crab as he free-dives 10m below the surface off the Cornish coast

Countryfile *this month...*

On 7 September, the team visit Stourbridge's Hagley Hall in the West Midlands to see part two of its 18th-century garden restoration. Set in 150 acres of deer park, the house and grounds were created by Lord Lyttleton, briefly chancellor of the exchequer, who landscaped the grounds in the Picturesque style from 1739 to 1764. The start of stage two involves revitalising the Hermitage Woods.

On 14 September, the team travel to Norfolk for the English mustard harvest, which is the country's only commonly grown spice. This year marks Colman's 200th anniversary as a mustard producer – Jeremiah Colman produced his first fiery blend of brown and white mustard at a Norfolk water mill in 1814.

one Watch Matt and the team on *Countryfile* every Sunday evening on BBC One.



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Your letters

Have your say on the latest rural issues

Is the traditional British strawberry in decline?



Letter of the month

Strawberry fields not forever?

The traditional British strawberry is in danger of extinction. As a 17 year old (around 33 years ago), I worked in a greengrocers and looked forward to the arrival of seasonal produce, especially strawberries. I noticed how the suppliers changed week to week, working from Kent up through the country as June moved into July. As an A-level geography student, this was a useful bit of training!

We all know how changes in importing methods and tastes have removed the seasonal anticipation of soft fruit, Christmas citrus fruit, British peas and apples etc. But there is something about the strawberry that is symbolic of the British summer.

Around the late 1970s, Spanish strawberries arrived. They were tasteless but were useful for brightening up a Christmas trifle.

Fast forward to my local Asda in June 2014, when I would expect to start seeing Kentish strawberries. Sadly not. I have been able to buy the same old flavourless Staffordshire fruit for months. Have the British tastes changed so much that no one is really bothered any more? Can traditional fruit farms survive?

Joanne Jones, Cheshire

Ben Briggs from the Farmers Guardian replies:

Field-grown strawberries remain a quintessentially British offering. However, that supply is now balanced by a large volume grown under glass and means British strawberries are available for more than six months a year, compared to six weeks in the 1980s.

Similar to other agriculture sectors, British fresh fruit farming has undergone huge consolidation over the past 25 years, but with provenance still a key concern for consumers, retailers will continue to stock British produce, both indoor and outdoor grown.

The prize

Our winner receives a Weird Fish cotton canvas weekender bag along with a thermal hipflask and thermal coffee flask, all worth £115. Perfect kit for a weekend away! www.weirdfish.co.uk



Killer slurry

Over the past few years there have been a number of deaths linked to slurry tanks on farms, particularly in Northern Ireland where I live. Three of those deaths were related to the one family, where a father and two sons lost their lives trying to rescue a family pup that had fallen into a slurry channel.

I'm not a farmer but one thing that occurred to me was that there is a real ignorance around the handling of slurry on farms; barely a week goes by when we don't hear of a death or near-death relating to slurry. Only a few months ago, an eight-year-old boy died and his father was critically injured when they stirred a tank on a neighbour's farm.

It would be great to expose and explain the dangers through the associated science, which *Countryfile* is very good at.

Trevor Herron, Northern Ireland

Editor Fergus Collins replies:

John Craven recently highlighted the issue of farm safety (July issue), especially in relation to children. With regard to slurry, it's something farm visitors and walkers should be

more aware of, too. We will highlight the issue in a future edition of the magazine.



Elephant in the garden

Last week while gardening I came across an unusual moth in my garden. Is one of your experts able to identify said moth?

Brian Hatch, Ongar, Essex

Editor Fergus Collins replies:

Lucky you – this is an elephant hawkmoth and as beautifully coloured as any of our butterflies. It takes its name from its huge, grey, trunk-like caterpillar.

You can't get there from here

Just thought fellow readers would find this lovely signpost near Rainow in Cheshire as amusing as I did (below).

Philip Rhodes, Crewe, Cheshire



Share your views and opinions by writing to us at:
**Have your say, *Countryfile Magazine*, 9th Floor,
 Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN;**
 or email editor@countryfile.com
We reserve the right to edit correspondence.

Cowed by cows

My husband and I are always very wary when faced with crossing a field of cows with our (very quiet and obedient) Labrador dog because we know how inquisitive cows can be – and they are huge animals up close.

When watching from the other side of a fence, we often see them run and barge each other for a better look if something attracts their attention. I would hate to be the focus of that attention.

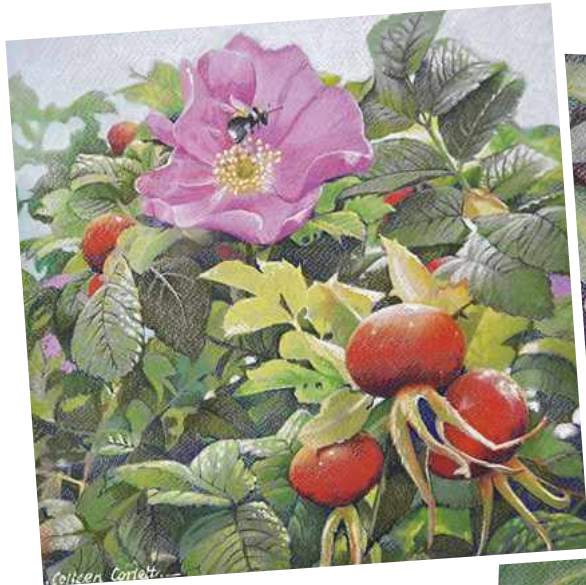
If possible, we pass them in an adjoining field. But surely, if a public footpath crosses a field, then the farmer should be obliged to provide a safe crossing for pedestrians? Say by use of a movable electric fence?

Diane Gordon, Cumbria

Time to Man up

We have just returned from a wonderful 10 days in the Isle of Man, inspired by Andrew White's feature article in the January edition.

We took eight days to walk the 96-mile coastal path and there is so much to see, from the open cliffside paths, wooded glens and valleys, to the superb seal-viewing



Wildflower art wonders

After reading Cath Hodson's *How to paint wildflowers* (July) I thought I would send you photos of our flower paintings. These are pastel pictures of a dog rose (left) and a rhododendron species (right).

Colleen Corlett, Onchan, Isle of Man

area at the Calf of Man and the higher ridge walk to Niarbyl.

All along we were greeted by friendly locals wishing us a good holiday and by helpful bus and taxi drivers, who provided links to our start points each day, and the excellent restaurants near our

hotel base, along the promenade in Douglas.

We feel the island does not 'sell' itself enough – it's just 40 minutes from Manchester by plane.

Jon Hodges, Congleton, Cheshire

Ash dieback help

We have several ash trees that seem to be suffering from ash die-back. They are struggling and have only a few shrunken leaves appearing at best. It would be interesting to know if there is anything we can do to save our trees.

Sue Hope, Keswick, Cumbria

The Woodland Trust says:

Report signs of ash dieback to the Forestry Commission on their website www.forestry.gov.uk

There's no treatment for an infected tree but leaf litter should be cleared and disposed of or burnt to stop the wind spreading disease-carrying spores.

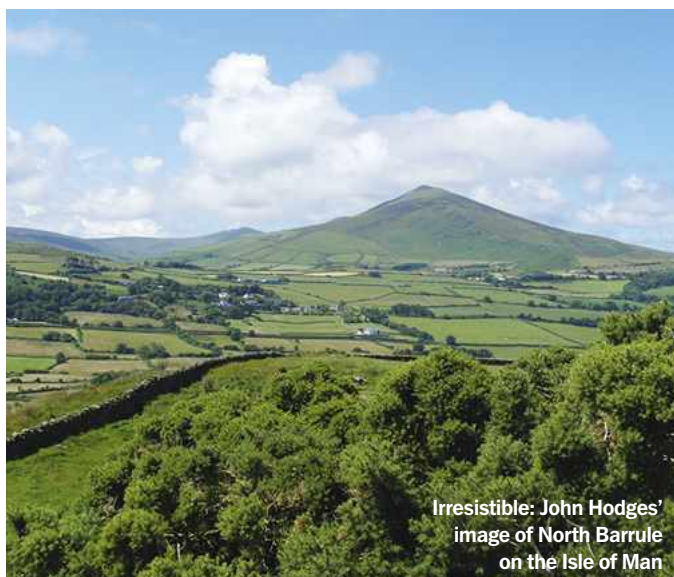
• **CORRECTIONS:** An editing error in August's issue meant that we wrongly captioned an image of straw bales as hay bales in Adam Henson's column. Huge apologies for this, especially to Adam. Here is a picture of hay cutting...



The August issue also included solutions to the July, rather than June, crossword. The correct June solutions are below:

Across: 3 Ass 7 Aylsham 8 The Oaks 10 Sugarloaf 11 Hydra 12 Preseli 14 Auction 16 Conference pears 19 Beccles 22 Easting 24 Loach 26 Lyme Regis 28 Digging 29 Ransome 30 Ely.

Down: 1 Clogheen 2 Char 3 Ammonite 4 Staffa 5 Mesh 6 Macdui 7 Aesop 9 St Agnes 13 Ewell 15 Capes 16 Cobbled 17 Creamery 18 Abingdon 20 Charge 21 Silage 23 Gusset 25 Hall 27 Rand.



Irresistible: John Hodges' image of North Barrule on the Isle of Man

Your photos

The pick of your countryside images



↑ Widespread wonder

By: Lucy Boak

Where:

Gloucestershire

"I spotted this beautiful peacock butterfly as it settled on the aubrietia in our back garden."

→ Bird on a wire

By: Helena Cowell

Where: Marton,
Cheshire

"I took this at Pikelow Farm. It was my first time in a bird hide and I was thrilled to see a large variety of wild birds, including woodpeckers, who were a little too quick for my camera! However, I managed to capture this great tit perched on a pole."



Send us your best photographs of the British countryside with a brief description to: **Your Photos, BBC Countryfile Magazine, 9th Floor, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN** or email photos@countryfile.com*



← Eye spy

By: Sam Morgan

Where: Caerphilly

"I'm a 15-year-old photographer from South Wales. At a recent local festival I saw this magnificent Eurasian eagle owl and thought you might like to take a look."

↓ Puffin with pride

By: Jason Hodder

Where: Farne Islands, Northumberland

"Photographing puffins on Staple Island with sand eels in their mouths was proving difficult due to greedy gulls chasing them for a free lunch. In a quiet corner far from the gulls this puffin sat quite happily with his."



← Reflected glory

By: Iain Fazackerley

Where: Buttermere, Lake District

"I made my first trip to Buttermere recently and was astounded by the beauty of the lake. The changeable Lake District weather is evident in the shot – while we were bathed in sunshine, the storm clouds were rolling in in the distance."

The prize

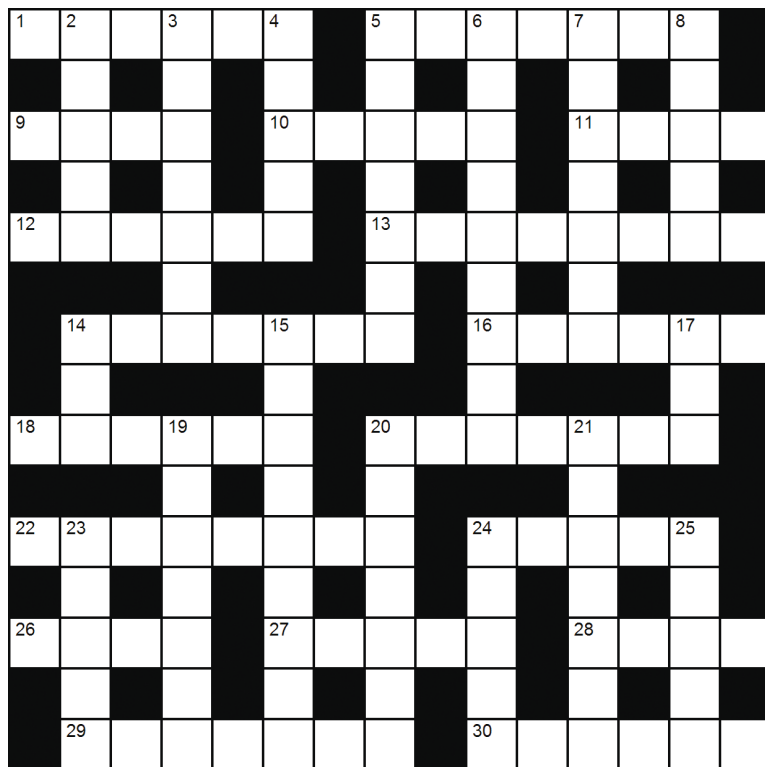
Our winner receives a pair of Teva's new Riva Peak Mid eVent boots. Designed to provide superior fit and durability, these mid-height boots feature a full-grain leather upper with waterproof protection and a sturdy Vibram sole. Whether on a short or multi-day hike, the Riva Peak Mid eVent ensures day-long comfort and performance. Available from www.teva.co.uk



* Please note: we cannot return photographs sent to us in the post

Countrycrossword

September's countryside-themed puzzle, by Eddie James



Across

- 1** Small green vegetable – mushroom! (6)
5 What a dog may happily do for a pied bird! (7)
9 Spadeful of earth used for roasting meat? (4)
10 Hardraw ____, waterfall in Yorkshire (5)
11 In short, an environmental research body – in inner city (4)
12 Cornish resort that's an artists' centre (2,4)

- 13** Large white pig vandalised calendar! (8)
14 Traditional boot material – the real alternative? (7)
16 Get-up-and-go – turning green at end of day (6)
18 Yorkshire Dales village in dusk I'd bypass (6)
20 Pesters nocturnal animals (7)
22 Yorkshire village, turning into glen! (5)
24 eg a Herdwick or Jacob (5)

- 26** You'll walk flat out if this has fallen! (4)
27 Sound of a nightjar ... in church, Urre Moor (5)
28 See 3dn.
29 A plant with flat, round seed pods – it's the best policy! (7)
30 Stoa's white fur associated with Street, the Roman way (6)

Down

- 2** Songbird begins with hard fruit seed (5)
3/28 Joint NT/Countryfile 2014 Awards for 'Wild Heroes' named after this NT founder (7,4)
4 Bunches of eg feathers or grass (5)
5 Songbird after sedge or willow, say (7)
6 Northumberland village on Pennine Way – odd hedge near (9)
7 Merseyside horse-racing venue confuses trainee (7)
8 Words of a song: "In Lovely Rickmansworth" (5)
14 Grouse's display area initially lures eager kestrels! (3)
15 Wainwright's ashes are scattered on this Lakeland fell (9)
17 An end produce of fracking in bog-asphodel? (3)
19 Phil, Don, swimming, might be spotted in eg Cardigan Bay (7)
20 Oxfordshire market town to prohibit northern town (7)
21 Worcestershire market town provides first woman's meat (7)
23 The top point of a compass? (5)
24 Loose rocks on mountain slope hidden by grass/creepers (5)
25 Shocking structural eyesore in the countryside? (5)

Solutions to July crossword

Across

- 1 Thistle
 5 Earwig
 10 Tree
 11 Neagh
 12 Seal
 13 Petrel
 14 Knotweed
 15 Chestnut
 17 Nature
 19 Vegans
 21 Colorado
 23 Hedgerow
 27 Grit
 28 Munro
 29 Ruts
 30 Thrush
 31 Amblers

Down

- 2 Horseshoe
 3 Shear
 4 Lanolin
 6 Ashdown
 7 Wastwater
 8 Graze
 9/25 Market garden
 16 Slaughter
 18 Red setter
 20 Scrumps
 21 Cawing
 22 Lugworm
 24 Egret
 26 Rural

Solutions will appear in the November issue

CORRECTION:

Our August issue featured July's answers rather than June's – please see the Letters page for the correct June answers.

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VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

Wildlife spotting on the Scillonian III

"They're here! Over here!" the excited passenger shouts. A small pod of dolphins have just started swimming alongside the Scillonian III. Far from a rare occurrence, these majestic creatures regularly join the ship on its journey to and from the Isles of Scilly.

The islands, known for their postcard-perfect harbours, gorgeous stone-built cottages and Caribbean-white sand, are also a hot spot for marine wildlife. Dolphins and seals are frequently spotted around the islands, and during the summer months there are sightings of sunfish and even whales. If you're a nature lover, there's no better way to catch a glimpse of these animals than from the deck of the Scillonian III.

DOLPHINS, SUNFISH AND WHALES

For the past five years, Paul Semmens, Marine Guide with Cornwall and The Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, has been a familiar face aboard the Scillonian III. During his last season on the ship, Paul spotted over two thousand animals on his journeys between Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Dolphins are a delight, and Paul can spot hundreds on a single trip, he's also had some incredible sightings of basking sharks, sunfish and even a Minke whale – which only surface once or twice, so you have to be on the lookout to catch one.

WELCOME TO PARADISE

Of course, the journey is just the beginning of your holiday adventure, once you arrive on the Scilly Isles there are miles of coastal paths and spectacular beaches to enjoy.

You could join St Martin's Dive School and go snorkelling with seals, book a wildlife tour through the coastal paths of St Mary's, keep your eyes peeled for the famous Scilly Shrew, or take a boat tour to the uninhabited islands, where rare birds and puffins have made the most of the remote location.

THE JOURNEY IS PART OF THE EXPERIENCE

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For an extra-special start to your holiday, book a place on our Skybus. Flying is a short and sweet 15 minutes from Land's End, and you'll enjoy breath-taking views of the Cornish coast and the islands from above.

To book your visit and to find out more about what these unique islands have to offer, visit islesofscilly-travel.co.uk.

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UPTON GRANGE: Giving a new meaning to 'BARN RAISING'

On the World Heritage Jurassic Coast, **DORSET**

A collection of luxury holiday cottages, imaginatively converted from a courtyard of 17th-century stone barns

From a position of considerable privilege cradled in the lee of the four hills that have afforded uncompromising protection from the elements over so many centuries, the mighty Tithe Barn of Upton Grange stands in silent testimony to the skills of the long departed craftsmen who created it.

FROM CONTRABAND TO COMMAND CENTRE

A peaceful history since its inception as the epicentre of the agricultural homestead of the settlement of Upringstede, gave way in the 1700's to a 'life of crime' as it became the hideout of smugglers

LOCAL AREAS OF INTEREST

- Jurassic Coast
- Miles of National Trust footpaths
- County Town of Dorchester
- Georgian Seaside Resort of Weymouth
- Thomas Hardy Country
- Bovington Tank Museum
- Lulworth Cove
- Isle of Purbeck

who sought to conceal their contraband liquor, tobacco, tea, salt and silks therein, to the frustration of the Excise Men who continually raided the buildings in search of evidence.

A stunning luxury holiday cottage complex, designed exclusively for the discerning visitor

A change of character in the 1800's saw the boy Thomas Hardy a frequent visitor to the courtyard where he played with the children of the resident farmer, no doubt unwittingly gaining inspiration for his later literary works, many of which were based around the immediate area.

Requisitioned to become RAF Upton during W.W.II, this rustic masterpiece played host to part of the team charged with the daunting task of orchestrating shipping in the English Channel for the D-Day landings.

Soon after the cessation of hostilities, a period of sad decline

ensued and by the latter part of the 20th Century Upton Barn had fallen into ruin.

THE RENAISSANCE

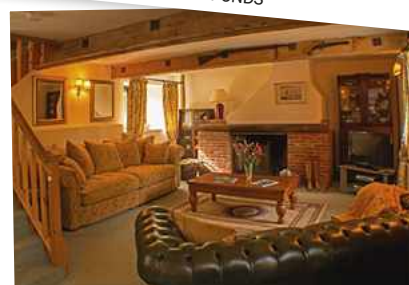
But the phoenix was to rise from the ashes, and the whole estate, now sympathetically restored to its former splendour, is enjoying a renaissance as a stunning luxury holiday cottage complex, designed exclusively for the discerning visitor. Turning their backs on the current trend for spartanism and minimalisation, the owners instead elected to furnish and equip these cottages in the 'Grand Style'. The expected essentials of modern life comfortably juxtapose with vintage pieces and artefacts from a bygone age, complemented by classical furnishings and interesting works of art, in short, visitors have the pleasure of living amongst possessions of a type and quality seldom encountered in self-catering accommodation today.

STRIVING FOR PERFECTION

Picture this within a setting of mature Olde-English gardens (and grounds that even include a



NATURAL SPRINGS FEED THE PONDS



COUNTRY HOUSE OR FARMHOUSE STYLING



FOUR POSTER BEDS GRACE THE LARGER COTTAGES

Heli-pad), and you start to get an idea of just how fulfilling a stay at Upton Grange can be.

Visitors should receive a flawless, professional service from the moment of their arrival and, despite having been the erstwhile retreat of numerous celebrities from the worlds of entertainment, business and public office, a commitment to remain entirely affordable is rigidly adhered to.

It is easy to see how Upton Grange could win a place in the pages of any family history book, and that 'first time' visitors will soon come to think of this rural-coastal idyll as their own 'secret place in the country'.



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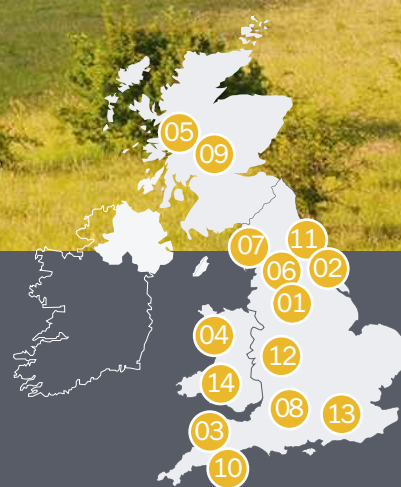
Last of the summer walks

There's still plenty of time to get out and enjoy the last rays of golden sunshine

Picture: Explore the South Downs, see page 103

GREAT DAYS OUT

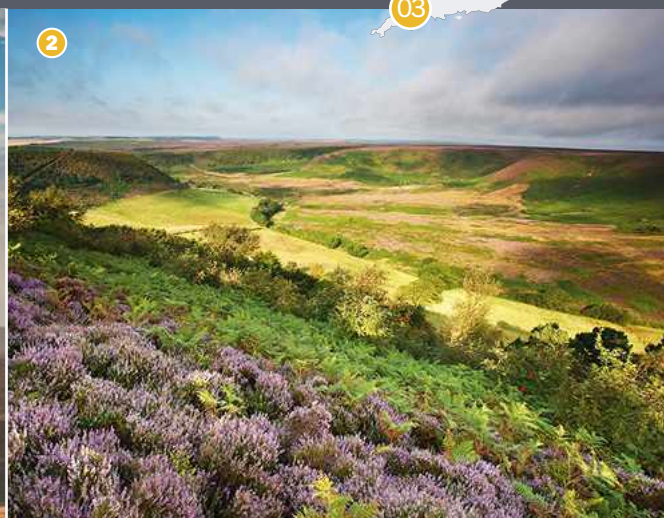
www.countryfile.com/daysout



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01–05 Heather moorlands

Days out | Five of the best upland rambles



Calm skies, cool air and the clear rays of late-summer sun – there is no better time to admire the purple burst of our magnificent moorlands, says **Roly Smith**

Without doubt, autumn is my favourite time of the year in the British countryside. Gone are those hazy, lazy days of high summer, when the bosky woods seem to be overburdened with foliage; when the birds, apart from the monotonous cooing of wood pigeons, can't even be bothered to sing; and my preferred upland views are obscured by a suffocating, shimmering heat haze.

Give me a bracing morning every time, when, as I look down my local dale, the shifting mists echo the shape and path of the Ice Age glacier that formed it. And you know that once you've climbed through the changing woodland out of the clammy, cotton-wool fog, you'll be greeted by the sun shining from a cloudless sky, crystal-clear air as invigorating as the finest wine and views that just go on forever.

Oncoming change

When John Keats wrote his famous *Ode To Autumn* – “season of mists and mellow fruitfulness” – nearly two centuries ago, he showed a countryman's eye for the changing year. He referred to what we'd call an Indian summer, when the later flowers, like the purple of the heather, paint the moorlands with their regal hue, making the bees think “warm days will never cease, for summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.” The sight of white-painted hives deposited on the moors show that bee-keepers still value heather honey above any other.

The last days of August and early September are the glorious climax of the moorland

year, when the carefully-managed ling, common and bell heather emerge to create stunning swathes of purple and mauve, sending clouds of dusty pollen into the air as you wade through the billowing acres of this tough little shrub.

In fact we owe our beautiful heather moorlands – unmatched anywhere else in Europe – to

“The last days of August and early September are the glorious climax of the moorland year”

one plump, furry-footed little game bird: the red grouse. The wonderful heather moorlands of Scotland, the Pennines, and the North York Moors were created and are managed almost exclusively for the benefit of this bird, which becomes the unwitting target for sportsmen after the “glorious Twelfth” of August.

Paradoxically, its warning “go-back, go-back” call merely acts as an invitation to me, as it has for generations of Pennine



The famous red grouse, which depends on its habitat of heather moorland

bog-trotters since the bad old days when these moors were strictly forbidden territory to the rambler, and the only way to enjoy them was to employ what one famous perpetrator called “the gentle art of trespass.”

Hanging in the air

I'm not sure what it is that makes me find autumn days so attractive. They are, after all, the last days of summer and the first sign of coming winter and harder times ahead.

Maybe it's the almost tangible air of melancholy that hangs in the autumnal air that I find so attractive.

But I know that when I see the swallows gathering, chattering on telephone wires like the notes on a musical score, before their incredible, 6,000-mile journey to sub-Saharan Africa, I can't help feeling just a little sad that the year has finally turned.

1 Derwent Edge, Peak District

The panoramic two-mile promenade along **Derwent Edge**, overlooking the **Upper Derwent Valley** and the glittering waters of the **Ladybower and Derwent Reservoirs**, is punctuated by extraordinary natural sculptures created by aeons of wind and rain from the native gritstone. Their descriptive names include the Salt Cellar, Cakes of Bread and Back Tor.

2 Hole of Horcum, North York Moors

By common consent, the **North York Moors** is the finest expanse of heather moorland in Britain, and it forms the largest continuous tract in England and Wales. For a taste, take a walk from **Levisham**

across **Levisham Moor**, which encloses the Hole of Horcum, a dramatic bowl on the moors' south-eastern corner.

3 The Chains, Exmoor

To experience the medieval **Royal Forest of Exmoor**, and some of its wildest country, the fairly challenging nine-mile walk from **Shallowford** over the moorland heights known as **The Chains** to Pinkworthy Pond and the source of the mighty River Exe at **Exe Head** is recommended.

4 The Rhinogs, Snowdonia

The rocky, heather-covered **Rhinogydd** offer some of the roughest and toughest walking in Britain. But an easy way to appreciate this wild Welsh bandit country is to start from the glorious sessile oakwoods surrounding **Cwm Bychan** up the paved slabs of the so-called Roman Steps, which are much more likely to be a medieval cattle droveway.

5 Rannoch Moor, Scottish Highlands

The great mountaineer WH Murray described the 56-square-mile waste of **Rannoch Moor** on the eastern approach to **Glencoe** as “the one perfect specimen of a Highland moor.”

From the moor's desolate centre, there are great views of the surrounding mountains across a landscape splattered with lochans, ancient birches and rocky outcrops. ☼



Roly Smith is a freelance writer and author who lives in the heart of the Peak District. His ‘specialist subject’ would be the Mass Trespass of 1932.

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06 Malham Cove

Walk | 6½ miles | 3 hours | Yorkshire Dales



MAIN The imposing Malham Cove stretches 260 feet high
RIGHT Looking like something out of Middle Earth, the ravine of Gordale Scar was carved by an ancient river



Looming stone, violent clefts and a magical waterfall – there's high drama to be found in the Yorkshire Dales By **Mark Rowe**

The two great limestone features of the north of England – the towering cliff-face of Malham Cove and the awe-inspiring cleft that is Gordale Scar – are the highlights of this classic walk in the spectacular Yorkshire Dales. Choose a sunny day to appreciate the startling white of the limestone outcrops and pavements that contrast with the green of the sheep-cropped fields under a bright blue sky.

A Raikes and grikes

The walk starts near **Malham Tarn**. The house just above, now a field studies centre, is where Charles Kingsley wrote *The Water Babies*.

From the car park, follow the sign in the direction of Malham Raikes. The track soon curves

slightly right, uphill.

Go over a ladder stile and ahead to a signpost. Follow Tarn Road, left of the ponds, to a green path going slightly uphill; where it forks bear right, nearer to the limestone pavement – flat areas of stone deeply intersected with fissures called grikes. Descend, with wide views, to a ladder stile in a wall.

B Into the scar

Turn right on to the road. After several downhill bends take a gate on the left, signed **Gordale**. Follow the path downhill, through a gate. Go through the next gate on the right, cross the field to another gate and descend to go through a fourth gate on to Gordale Bridge and the road.

Follow a left to visit **Gordale**

Scar – take a gate on the left just on the bend – and follow the track as the valley narrows and twists.

A final bend brings you to the waterfall in the narrowest part of the gorge. The Scar was once thought to be a collapsed cave system. It's now believed that the stream gradually eroded away the limestone.

C Fairy queen

Return the same way, back to Gordale Bridge; 200 yards beyond, go left through a gate by a National Trust Janet's Foss sign. Follow the path, bearing right at a fork.

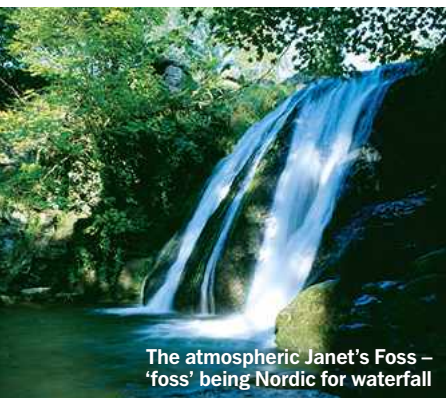
The beautiful Janet's Foss (foss means waterfall; Janet was queen of the fairies) is noted for its screen of tufa, a curtain of soft, porous limestone formed

by the stream's deposits.

The path goes through several gates, at first in woodland. At a Pennine Way sign turn right. Opposite a white house turn left over a footbridge to the street.

D Towering cove

Bear left after the Buck Inn and continue up the road. Just beyond Town End Barn go right, through a gate signed Malham Cove. Follow the path towards the cove, which looms ahead; it is 82m high and more than 300m wide, and was formed by three forces – a glacier, earth movement and erosion from a former waterfall. Malham Beck flows out of the ➔



The atmospheric Janet's Foss – 'foss' being Nordic for waterfall

➤ Cove's base. After a paved section, take the left fork to climb the many steps up the side of the cove.

E Vanishing water
After a gate at the top bear right, taking great care to avoid both the sheer drop to your right and the grikes. Bear gradually left to pick up a grassy path to a gated stile. Go over

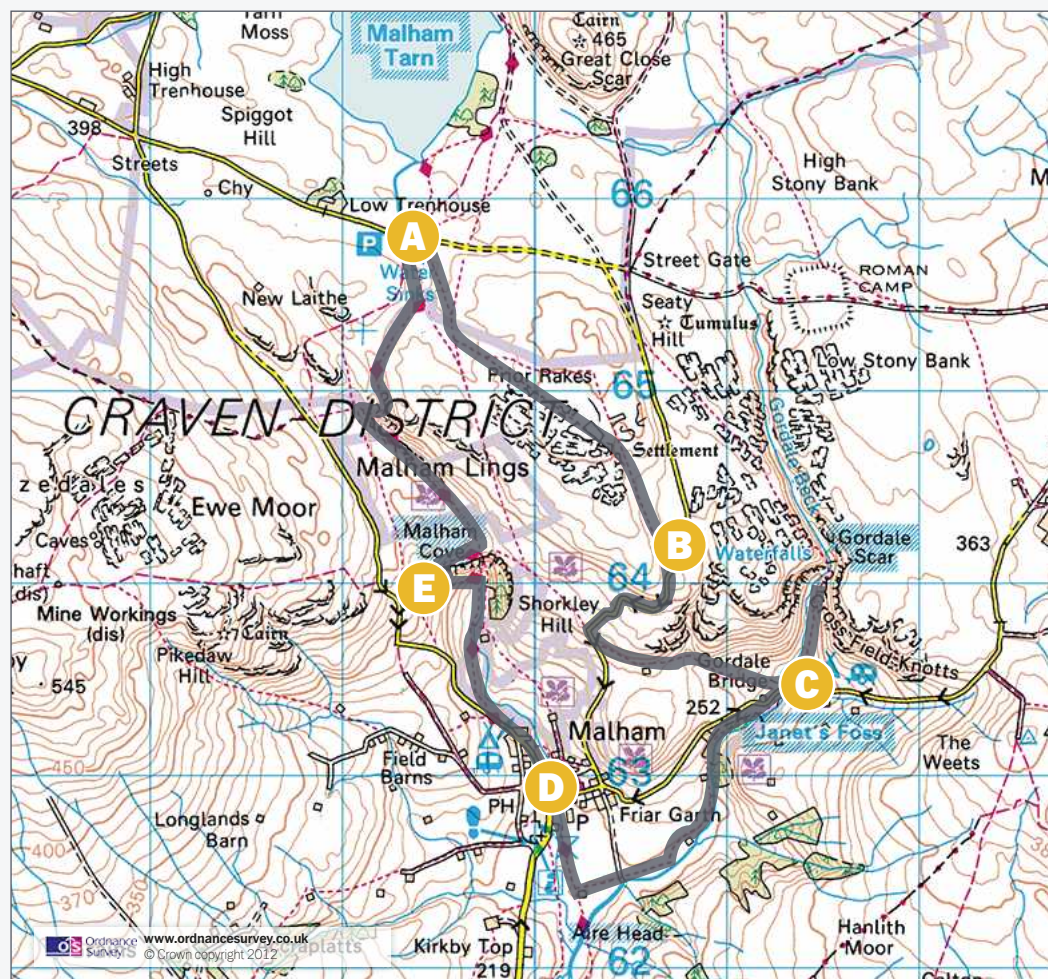
the stile and along **Watloes Valley**, which gradually narrows.

After a stile at the top of some steps turn right and follow the path, keeping to the wall on the right, where it divides.

Just beyond, the stream from Malham Tarn disappears into a labyrinth of caves. The car park appears ahead; bend left through a gate on to a track to the road to reach it. 📍

06 Malham Cove

Walk | 6½ miles | 3 hours | Yorkshire Dales



Photos: Alamy

USEFUL INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE

By car, Malham is nine miles north-west of Skipton – follow signs from Gargrave on A65. There are various public transport bus options. The nearest train station is Gargrave. The walk starts at the car park beside the stream at the southern end of Malham Tarn, nearly two miles north of Malham village.

FIND OUT MORE

Yorkshire Dales National Park
National Park Centre, Malham,
BD23 4DA
☎ 01729 833200
🌐 www.yorkshiredales.org.uk

EAT/STAY

The Lister Arms
Finkle St, Malham BD23 4DB
☎ 01729 830 330
🌐 www.listerarms.co.uk
Traditional inn in the heart of Malham village, with comfortable rooms and home-cooked food.



VISIT

Museum of North Craven Life
Chapel Street, Settle
Housed in an elaborate Grade I listed merchant's house of 1679, called The Folly, the museum tells the story of North Craven through its landscape and people.

MAP



Ordnance Survey Explorer OL2
Grid Reference: SD 898 632

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www.countryfile.com/daysout

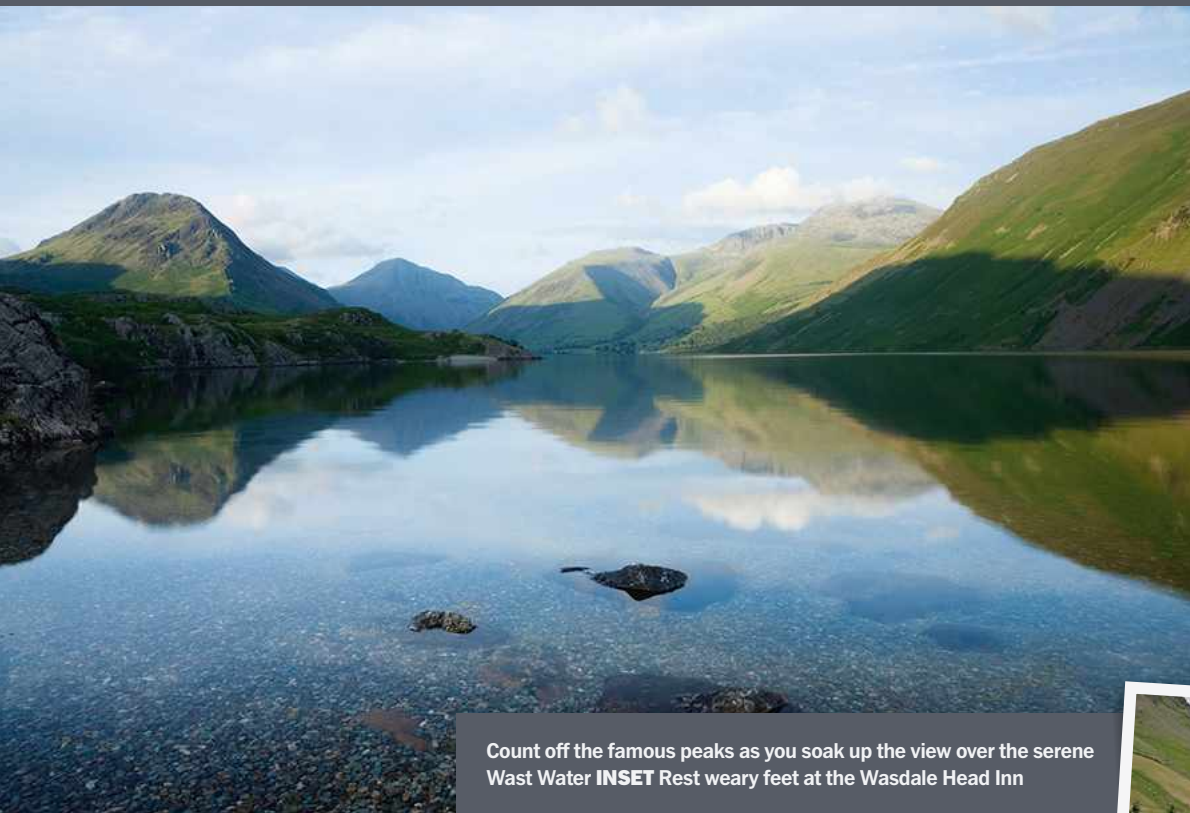
Keighley railway Yorkshire
Catch a steam train into the world of the *Railway Children*.

Haworth Yorkshire
Walk through a landscape made famous by the Brontë sisters.



07 Wast Water

Day out | Lake District



Count off the famous peaks as you soak up the view over the serene Wast Water **INSET** Rest weary feet at the Wasdale Head Inn

USEFUL INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE

From the south, exit the M6 at J36. Follow the A590 and A5092 to Broughton in Furness then minor roads via Ulpha and Santon Bridge. The nearest rail station is Seascale (near Gosforth). It is also possible to travel on the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway

📍 ravenglass-railway.co.uk

FIND OUT MORE

Cumbria Tourist Board

📍 www.golakes.co.uk

Lake District National Park website

📍 www.lakedistrict.gov.uk



If you embark on only one Lakeland adventure this summer, head to this mystical mountain-ringed lake **By Fergal MacErlean**

Although William Wordsworth loved the Lake District immensely and believed its concentration of scenic interest to have a “decided superiority” over that of Scotland or Wales, he rather undersold its most dramatic lake of all.

“The long, narrow, stern and desolate Lake of Wast Dale” is how the great poet described England’s deepest lake “within its bed of steep mountains”.

While **Wast Water**, as it is known today, can appear a little stern on a gunmetal grey day, when bathed in late summer sunshine it is breathtaking.

The roadside view from the south-western end of the lake was voted one of Britain’s favourite views by television viewers. It’s simply an iconic and very photogenic vista with the

mountains of **Yewbarrow**, **Great Gable** and **Lingmell** bunched pleasingly beyond, while across the elongate lake the famous scree, which run to its edge, add a menacing air.

Sights for sore eyes

For the three-mile length of Wast Water the tiny road hugs its shores. England’s highest peak **Scafell Pike** and its neighbour, **Sca Fell**, lie behind bulky **Lingmell** and, depending on the angle, varying amounts of these large mountains can be seen.

The road ends at **Wasdale Head**, from where you can set off on any number of adventures or strolls, or simply relax in the beer garden at the Wasdale Head Inn. This fertile valley was colonised by Norse farmers in the 9th and 10th century and gave the area its name. In more recent times,

Wasdale was central to the Golden Age of early British climbing when pioneering young men were drawn to the crags in 1882.

For your very own bird’s eye view of Wast Water, follow the path towards **Eskdale**, which makes a fine low-level walk, and then south-west up to a broad grassy ridge to **Ilgill Head**.

From there you can gaze down on the 79m-deep lake. Avoid the scree path, which requires hopping over boulders.

Over hill and dale

Another good straightforward walk is to take the path to **Styhead Tarn** from Wasdale Head. A path leads towards a yew copse, which hides the tiny old St Olaf’s church.

Then a wide lane, flanked by stone walls, leads you through Burnthwaite Farm and on to the

open dale. Sturdy Herdwick sheep watch as you pass tranquil patches of crimson sundews in the valley.

More adventurous walkers and experienced scramblers can branch off the path ahead to take the rewarding **Piers Gill** route to the top of 977m-high Scafell Pike. Whichever path you take, your eye will be drawn to the pyramidal mass of Great Gable.

Among the crags visible below its summit are the Napes, where much of the early rock climbing took place. Up there, among jagged spires and red scree, mustachioed men made history by establishing the sport in Britain.

Return to the Wasdale Head Inn – still a favourite with walkers and climbers – to soak up some of its fine heritage in this remarkable location. 📍

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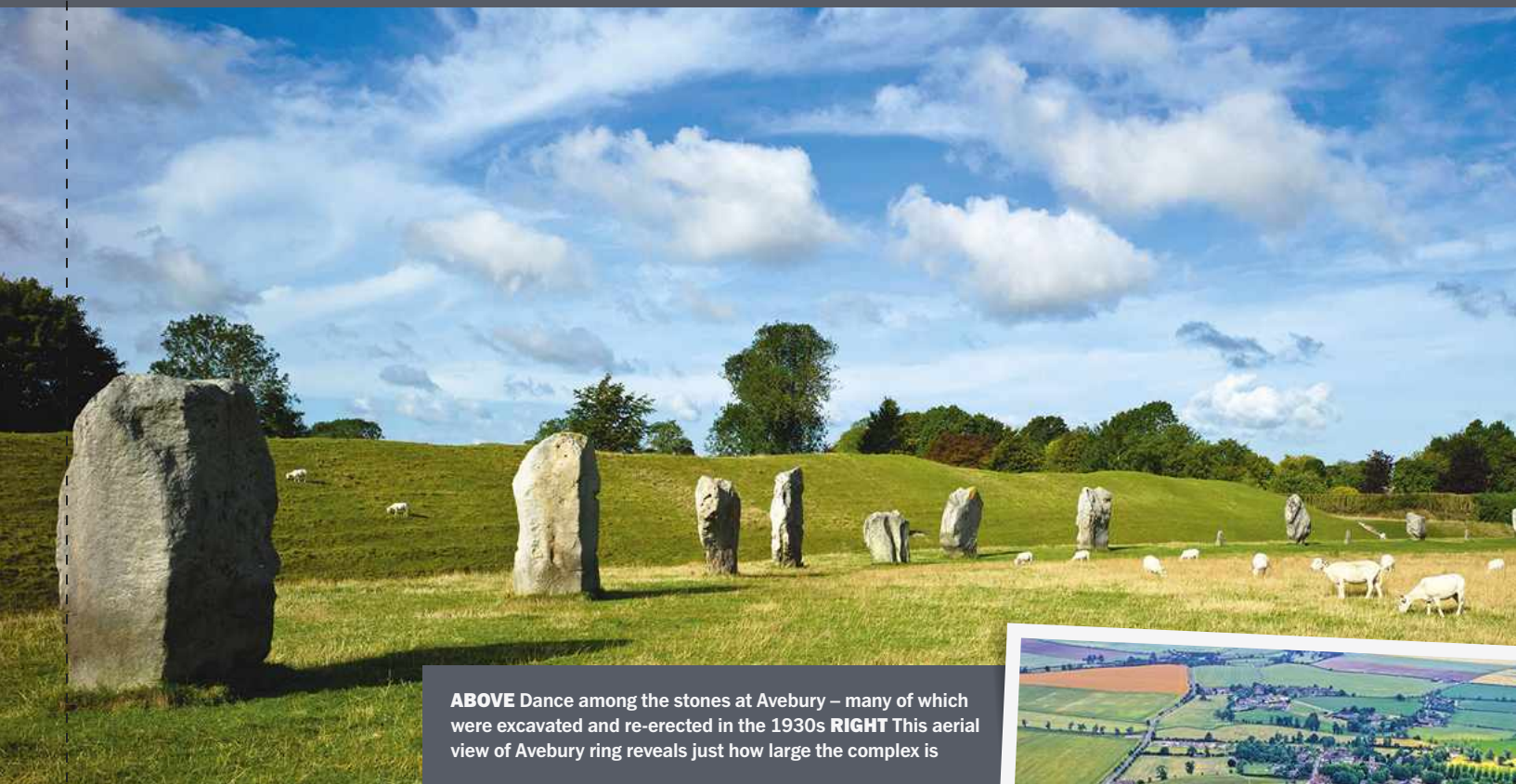
Battle • Bexhill • Hastings • Herstmonceux • Pevensey • Rye





08 Prehistoric Avebury

Walk | 5 miles | 2 hours | Wiltshire



ABOVE Dance among the stones at Avebury – many of which were excavated and re-erected in the 1930s **RIGHT** This aerial view of Avebury ring reveals just how large the complex is



Discover a land of ancient mounds, sarsen stone rings, burial chambers and a ghostly priest **By Anthony Burton**

Thousands of years of history hum and tingle across this magical landscape, and even non-archaeology buffs will be taken in by its charm. It all starts at the car park in Avebury.

A Historic henge
Take the obvious path to arrive at Britain's biggest henge – no, not Stonehenge, but **Avebury Ring**, constructed almost 5,000 years ago.

A henge monument is defined as a Neolithic site consisting of an enclosure, usually circular, defined by a bank and ditch. Some henges also contain standing stones, but not all.

This really is spectacular with an immense bank and ditch, inside of which are the remains of a ring, with 98 giant sarsen

stones still standing. Inside this are two smaller stone circles.

B Ancient Avebury
Once you have taken time to explore this magnificent monument, leave the site by a gate in the far side of the bank to join the minor road that leads uphill towards the downs.

Where this deteriorates into a track, turn right by the barns onto the rutted track that climbs steadily and the view gradually opens out to reveal an avenue of standing stones leading up to the Avebury Ring.

At the top of the ridge, it joins the ancient track, **The Ridgeway**, by a clump of trees on top of a circular mound. This is a round barrow, a Bronze Age burial chamber. Turn right, following the broad track.

C Shrine on
Cross over the main road and you arrive at **The Sanctuary** that appears to have been a prehistoric shrine, originally defined by a ring of wooden posts, now replaced by concrete. From here follow the path down towards the village of **East Kennett**, whose church spire can be spotted rising above the trees.

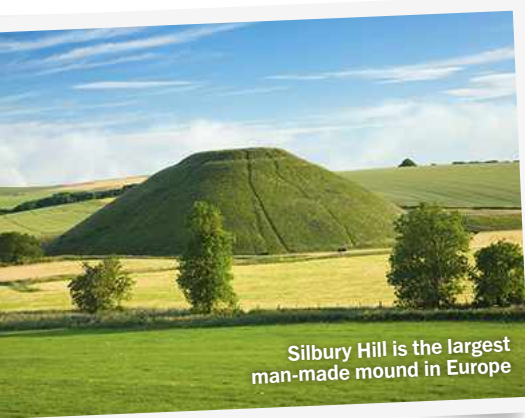
The track crosses a stream and continues straight on to a minor road. At the junction turn right and head through the village and once clear of the houses, look out for a red-brick pump house on the left. Just before reaching it, turn left on to the track.

After a few yards, continue along the tree-shaded footpath,

cross a stile and then follow the line of the fence to a junction. Turn left to visit West Kennett long barrow, which can be seen silhouetted on the horizon.

D Burial chamber
This is another monument dating back to Neolithic times and one of the best preserved examples of its kind. It is an immense burial chamber, its entrance marked by two massive standing stones.

Beyond that is a dark passageway leading to two smaller chambers, each of which is covered by a huge capping stone.



Silbury Hill is the largest man-made mound in Europe

► Excavations in the 20th century found remains of 46 burials altogether with pottery and flints. It is said that if you come here at sunrise on

midsummer's day, you will see a ghostly priest with a spectral dog – though few have seen it for themselves.

E Man power

Retrace your steps back to the track junction, continue on down to the main road

and cross it to join the path by the side of a huge mound – **Silbury Hill**. This is man-made and when plant samples were taken from the centre, they

were found to date back to 2145 BC.

This is the biggest prehistoric mound in Europe, and no-one really knows why it was built, but it must have been of great importance as it has been estimated that it would have taken 500 workers at least 10 years to complete it.

According to legend, King Sil sits in the middle on his horse, but no trace of him has ever been found. Continue on the path beside the stream to return to the start. 📍

08 Avebury

Walk | 5 miles | 2 hours | Wiltshire



Photos: Alamy

USEFUL INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE

The village of Avebury is situated just north of the A4 between Marlborough and Calne.

FIND OUT MORE

The Andrew Keiller Museum Avebury, Wiltshire SN8 1RT

📍 www.english-heritage.org.uk/dayout/properties/avebury-alexander-keiller-museum

Andrew Keiller undertook the first restoration work at Avebury and the museum displays many of his finds and other local archaeological discoveries.

EAT

The Circle Café
High Street, Avebury
Wiltshire SN8 1RF

📍 www.nationaltrust.org.uk/avebury/eating-and-shopping

A National Trust café serving delicious food in the heart of the village.



STAY

Avebury Life
5 Trusloe Cottages, Avebury
Trusloe, Wiltshire SN8 1QZ

📍 www.aveburylife.com

☎ 01672 5396144

An attractive vegetarian B & B.

MAP

OS Ordnance Survey

OS Landranger 173
Grid Reference: SU 100698

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Castle Combe Wiltshire
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09 Ben Lawers Nature Reserve

Great day out | Perthshire



Mountain views, easy low-level walks, incredible scenery and exceptional wildlife – Ben Lawers has it all

By **Keith Fergus**

Sitting high above Loch Tay in Perthshire, Ben Lawers National Nature Reserve encompasses nine mountains over 3,000 feet in height. Two of the biggest are Ben Lawers, Britain's 10th highest peak, climbing to 1,214 metres, and its neighbour Beinn Ghlas, reaching 1,100 metres.

A 6.5-mile tramp across both mountains is one of the finest in Central Scotland but for something less demanding, a simple stroll around the Ben Lawers Nature Trail fits the bill.

Mountains as molehills

The best start point for both walks is the National Trust car park, just south of Lochan na Lairige. As the car park sits at 450 metres, much of the hard work for Beinn Ghlas and Ben Lawers is already done, making this hill walk ideal for younger children. Excellent paths line the circular route, crossing Beinn Ghlas and Ben Lawers before a gorgeous descent above a secluded glen returns to the start.

The views are breathtaking – Schiehallion's sharp cone, the twin peaks of Ben Vorlich and Stuc a Chroin and the long finger of Loch Tay are

particularly appealing.

At 1.25 miles, the Ben Lawers Nature Trail is a lovely little route. It runs alongside the Edramucky Burn before travelling through a glorious glen with views of the mountains Meall nan Tarmachan, Meall Corranaich and Beinn Ghlas.

The geology of the landscape – the acidic bog and wide-open glens – means the flora and fauna are diverse and spectacular. Alpine saxifrage was found here in 1768, while alpine mouse-ear and moss campion can also be seen, along with globeflower, roseroot and highland saxifrage.

Wildlife includes mountain ringlet butterfly, black grouse, ptarmigan, red deer and raven.

Scrubbing away sin

A descent to the banks of Loch Tay, with its superb views, and a stroll around the picturesque village of Killin is recommended.

For those visiting Killin, the real draw is the incredible Falls of Dochart. The word Dochart translates from Gaelic as 'Evil Scourer' and several dramatic waterfalls cascade underneath the lovely old stone Bridge of Dochart, which dates from 1760 with the central arch rebuilt in 1831 after a flood. The bridge grants a fine vantage point to gaze over the falls.

The River Dochart also flows around Innis Buidhe (the Yellow Island), which is home to the Clan McNab burial ground. Clan McNab lived in Glen Dochart and Strath Fillan for over 800 years and the burial ground dates back to the 1700s. The island is home to 15 graves, nine of which are the final resting places of clan chiefs. There is also a medieval grave, indicating that the earliest burial took place here several hundred years ago. 🍷

Look out for dippers along Ben Lawers's streams and burns

USEFUL INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE

Ben Lawers is six miles northeast of Killin, on the road from Loch Tay to Glen Lyon. Kingshouse Travel Bus Service C60 goes between Callander and Killin.

☎ 0871 200 2233

🌐 www.travelinescotland.com

EAT

The Falls of Dochart Inn
Gray Street, Killin, FK21 8SL
☎ 01567 820270

🌐 www.falls-of-dochart-inn.co.uk

This atmospheric pub serves great food and award-winning ales beside the Falls of Dochart.

STAY

Killin Hotel
Killin, FK21 8TP
☎ 01567 820 296

🌐 www.killinhotel.com

With a wonderful view over the River Lochay, the Killin Hotel has 36 comfortable bedrooms and two restaurants serving mouthwatering food.



Keep an eye out for the mountain ringlet butterfly

Photos: Alamy



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10 Salcombe

Walk | 6 miles | 3½ hours | Devon



The waves roar below the cliff path above Lantern Rock, looking toward Bolt Tail between Salcombe and Hope Cove
RIGHT Spot the swallows before their grand depart to Africa

Follow the swallows along a spectacular stretch of the south coast of Devon By Mark Rowe

For birdwatchers, early autumn can be a time for melancholic leave-taking. The swifts have already departed, headed for Africa. Let's be thankful then, for the swallows. They've graced our skies for four months or more, darting furiously after insects, and even being hunted down themselves in aeronautical combat with hobbies.

Now, however, the swallows are packing their bags for their big trip south. Typically for such an elegant bird, they often do this in style. No sneaking off in the middle of the night, one by one. They know they have

a substantial journey ahead of them, so will spend the last few days feeding voraciously and gathering near the southern shores of Britain.

One of the best places to see this spectacle is the **South Hams** in Devon, and this walk gives you a fighting chance of giving these magical birds a cheery send-off – as well as taking in some thrilling coastal scenery.

A Soaring high
We start in the small car park at **Soar Mill Cove**, just behind Soar Mill Cove Hotel, just west of **Salcombe**. We walk down to the small beach, where

the path follows a signpost for **Bolberry Down**, climbs

steeply above **Hazel Tor** and undulates its way north-west along the coast path.

Suddenly, the hemmed-in woodland features are replaced by open sea. Classic autumn flowers, such as rock samphire, can be found along here.

B Wide open coast
The path reaches Bolberry Down with the views throwing much of Devon – from **Dartmoor** to **Wembury** and the **Eddystone** lighthouse, 13 miles south of Plymouth – wide open. The coast path sweeps

down to dramatic **Bolt Tail**, the eastern end of the headland bookended by **Bolt Head**; to the right is sheltered **Hope Cove** and beyond, crumbling rocky outcrops edge out into the sea, resembling giant windbreaks.

C Clifftop scramble
Follow the coast path down to Bolt Tail and the remnants of a hillfort, dated to around 500–600 BC. The ramparts are clearly visible as you approach – they were built on three sides, with the sheer cliffs forming the



Photos: Alamy, RSPB Images

► impregnable fourth side. A word to the wise is necessary here: Bolt Tail's unfenced cliffs are tucked away behind the ruins and can spring themselves on even the most steel-nerved of tightrope walkers. Keep children and dogs on a firm leash.

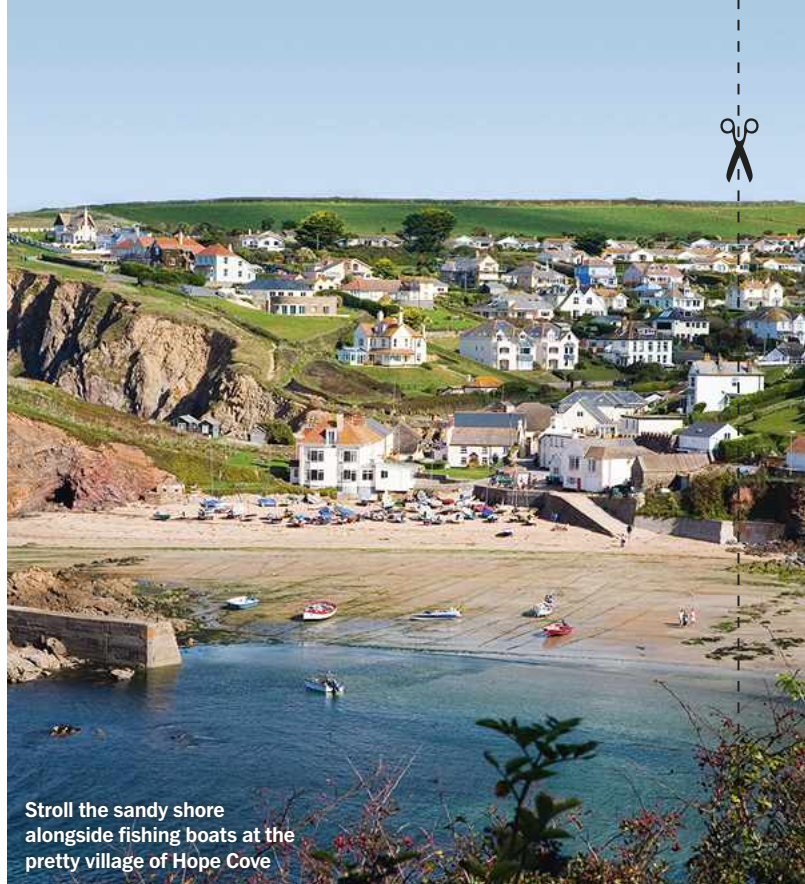
I've no idea whether the swallows here made their summer home in Devon, or if these are long-distance birds from northern Scotland. But there are several hundred of them, swirling, darting in the air, like a modest-sized starling roost. They rest on telephone wires, tree branches, their numbers briefly recreating a less terrifying scene from Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*.

Then, in the crepuscular light that follows the setting sun, they funnel their way out to sea. Many remain when I reluctantly call it a night. But by the next morning, they are all gone.

Make your way back

This is a there-and-back-again route, and the views returning east are just as wonderful, with much of the South Hams spread out before you. The coast pulls away towards Bolt Head, **Gara Rock** and **Portlemouth Down**.

I've seen the swallows go from Bolt Tails, but this is also a place to see them make landfall: so why not return next April and welcome this brilliant bird back to our shores? ☺



Stroll the sandy shore alongside fishing boats at the pretty village of Hope Cove

10 Salcombe

Walk | 6 miles | 3½ hours | Devon



USEFUL INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE

Park in Soar Mill Cove car park, west of Malborough, near Salcombe.

FIND OUT MORE

► salcombeinformation.co.uk

EAT

Soar Mill Cove Hotel
Nr Salcombe, South Devon
UK TQ7 3DS

☎ 01548 561566

► www.soarmillcove.co.uk

Soar Mill Cove Hotel is tucked away above the cove of the same name and serves enormous cream teas overlooking the coast.

MAP

Ordnance Survey

OL20 South Devon
Grid Reference: SX 703 375

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Blackpool Sands Devon
Crack a crab with Julia Bradbury, as she tours the Devonshire coastline.

Greenway Devon
Explore the beautiful River Dart valley and examine the home of Agatha Christie.



11 Goathland

Day out | Yorkshire



Explore wild moorland, cascading streams, historic roads *and* a steam railway – all from one welcoming village **By Anthony Burton**

The village of Goathland sits at the heart of the North Yorkshire Moors National Park, a huge area of heather moorland, cut into by steep-sided dales. It is a picturesque little place, so much so that it has become a popular location for television dramas, most recently *Heartbeat*. With its village green and clusters of stone houses, shops and hotels, it is a place to linger, but more than that, it is an ideal centre for exploring the surrounding area.

You can choose walks of great variety. The village is surrounded by the moors, rising up to around 1,000 feet above sea level. They offer a lovely sense of openness, with wide vistas and little to disturb the peace apart from the welcome song of the skylark. Though you may occasionally get a shock when a grouse explodes out of the heather right in front of you with a frantic whirr of wings.

Potter to the station

Goathland station will be familiar to many as Hogsmeade Station in the *Harry Potter* films. And steam-train enthusiasts will know it as one of the country's most attractive railways.

Heading west from the village, however, is a different experience. Here, a little river has carved a deep gully with steep wooded slopes. Exploring it involves scrambling among vast boulders but it's worth the effort to see **Mallyan Spout**, a waterfall that cascades from a height of 70 feet down to the rocks.

Above that is **Beck Hole**, a hamlet of just a few houses, which




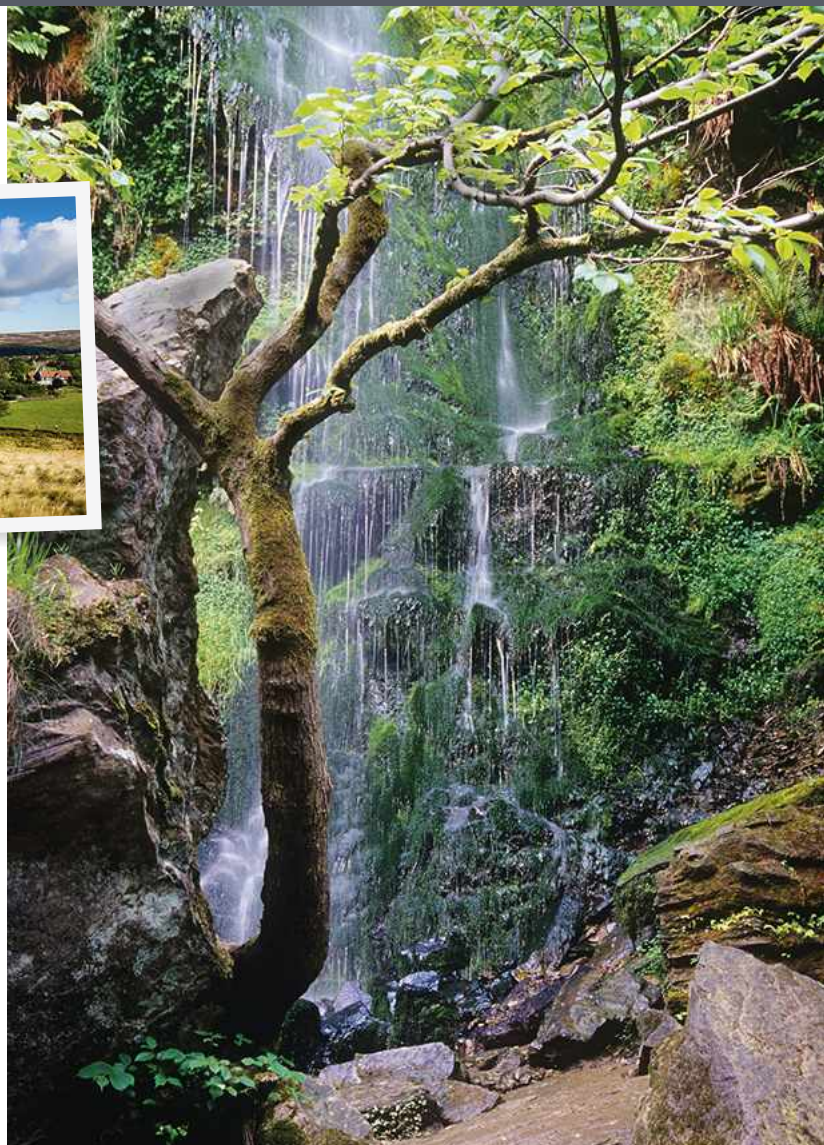
boasts a wonderful pub, the Birch Hall Inn, which also doubles up as a sweet shop. Unlikely as it may seem, there was once a railway here, one of the very early ones for which George Stephenson was the chief engineer.

Road of mystery

Walking south from the village along the little **Wheeldale Valley** brings you to the YHA hostel. From here a path leads up to the top of the moor and **Wade's Causeway**. This is the finest section of Roman road to be found in Britain. There is something of a mystery about it, since it is unclear where it came from or where it was headed, and no one seems to be sure about the origin of the name. One theory is that it was once mistaken for the work of the 18th-century military road builder, General Wade.

What is certain is that it extends for a mile and a half as a paved road and one can see the quality of the Roman workmanship. The surface is 5m wide and consists of large stone slabs, with kerbstones at the boundary. There are neatly constructed stone culverts at intervals to allow water to drain away under the surface.

So whether walking, cycling, steaming or sightseeing, Goathland really does have it all. 



ABOVE LEFT The village of Goathland is comfortably nestled in Yorkshire moorland **ABOVE** Mallyan Spout looks almost tropical – the waterfall is surrounded by lush vegetation that loves the damp conditions in the valley


USEFUL INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE

The village is reached by minor roads off the A169, Pickering to Whitby road. Alternatively, you can travel by steam railway from Pickering, or by conventional railway from Whitby and then change at Grosmont.

FIND OUT MORE

The Moors National Park Centre
Lodge Lane, Danby,
Whitby YO21 2NB

 www.northyorkmoore.org.uk/visiting/visitor-centre

EAT/STAY

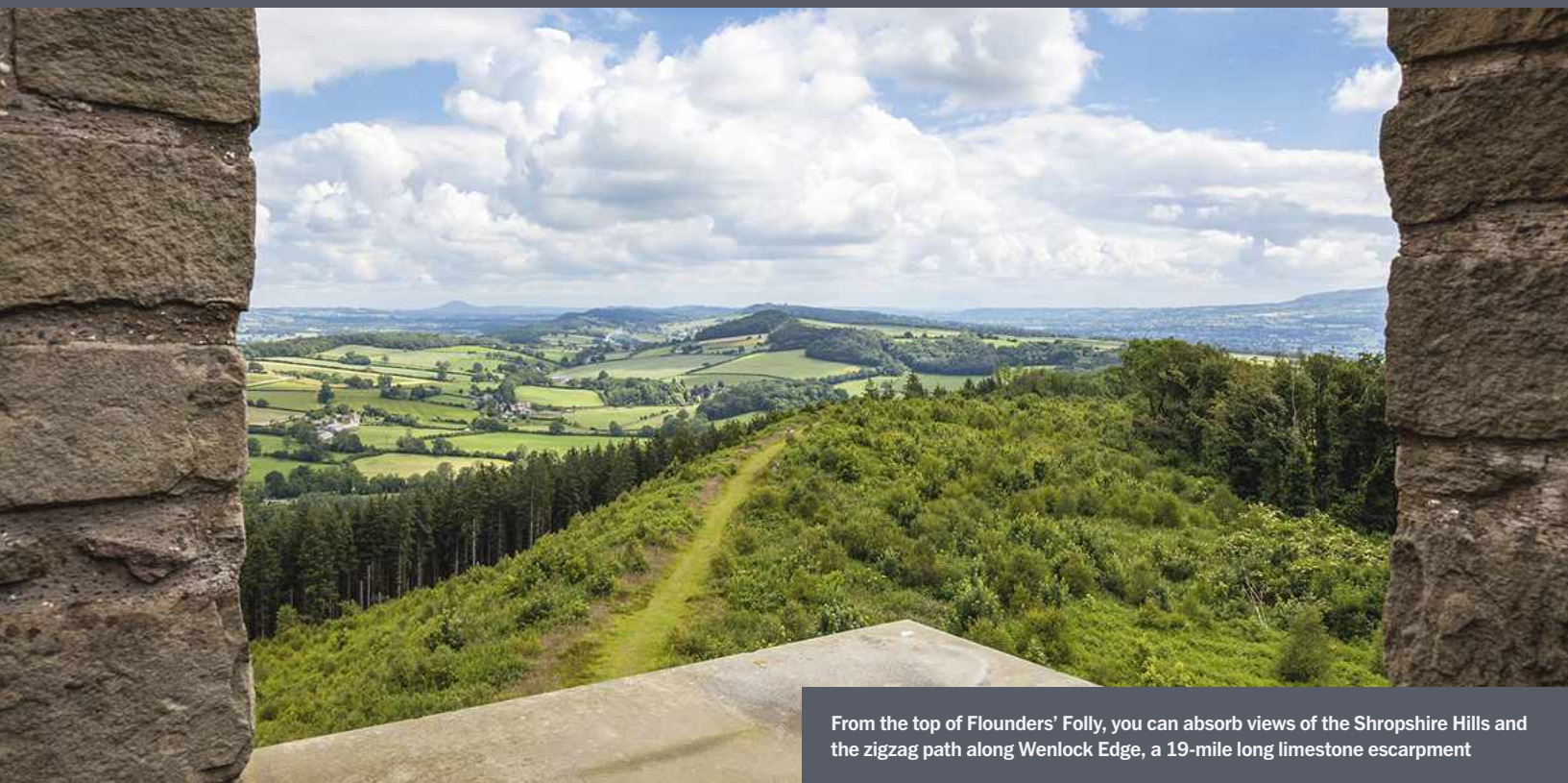
The Mallyan Spout Hotel
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12 Flounders' Folly

Day out | Shropshire



From the top of Flounders' Folly, you can absorb views of the Shropshire Hills and the zigzag path along Wenlock Edge, a 19-mile long limestone escarpment

A stroll through the Shropshire countryside reveals a historic folly with epic views across the Welsh marshes By Simon Whaley

It is said that Benjamin Flounders built his 80-foot tall folly on the top of Callow Hill so he could watch his ships on the Mersey and the Bristol Channel at the same time.

You'll be fortunate if you manage this feat, but this impressive Shropshire viewpoint offers a vista that includes the West Midlands, the Malvern Hills, the Black Mountains, Herefordshire, Shropshire and, on a clear day, Cadair Idris, near Barmouth on the Welsh Coast.

Callow Hill marks the south-western end of **Wenlock Edge**, a 17-mile wooded ridge of limestone. If you wander up from the car park near **Lower Dinchope**, you may spot fossils in the rocky remains as the path zigzags its way up to the tower.

For a longer summer wander, set off from the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre at Craven Arms. A waymarked route will take you through the **Onny Valley** (look out for dippers, kingfishers, and buzzards) and continues up the lower flanks of Wenlock Edge, through the Callowhill Plantations, to reach this idyllic spot.

Not only is the tower perched for a perfect viewpoint, the spot also marks the point where three parishes and four large country estates met, including the Culmington estate that Flounders inherited from his uncle. As part of a wealthy family, Flounders had the means to invest in new technologies of the time, in particular his interest in transport. His estates produced timber for the shipbuilding industry, and

he helped finance several canals in the north-east.

Vantage point

The tower was built to last. Its walls are two feet thick and broken only by the narrowest of window slits. Originally, a wooden staircase climbed from side to side to reach the castellated tower top, crowned by a flagpole. Exposure to the elements meant the castellated stones deteriorated badly in the 1980s, and eventually led to the tower's closure on the grounds of public safety.

The Flounders' Folly Trust was established in 2000. Five years later the tower was reopened, and now sports a metal staircase that takes visitors into a hexagonal glass dome.

So on a summer's day, why not climb up to the sky and share it with skylarks and red kites? ☀️

USEFUL INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE

There is a small parking area north of Lower Dinchope (Grid Ref: SO 457854) two miles north of Craven Arms. Better to walk signed route from the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, just off the A49 at Craven Arms.

FIND OUT MORE

📍 www.floundersfolly.org.uk
Admission free – donations gratefully received.



EAT & STAY

Affcot Lodge
Upper Affcot, Church Stretton
Shropshire, SY6 6RL
☎ 01694 781275
📍 www.affcot-lodge.co.uk
Relax in style, while enjoying the freshest local produce.





13 Ditchling Beacon

Walk | 5½ miles | 2 hours | West Sussex



MAIN Ditchling Beacon is one of the highest (and prettiest) points in the South Downs, at around 250m **TOP RIGHT** A warm late summer's afternoon will see chalkhill blues skittering in the long grass, and... **BOTTOM RIGHT** ... yellowhammers wheezing from scrubby hawthorns



Stride out across the roof of Sussex, along the most delightful and devilish section of the South Downs Way Words by **Emily Gravenor**

Seeing Brighton from the vantage point of an open-top double decker was just the first of many treats on this glorious trip to the South Downs. The number 77, which runs from Brighton to Devil's Dyke daily in the summer, doesn't pass the hidden nudist beach on the coast, but other than that the brisk, breezy ride to the UK's largest dry valley is a great way to feast your eyes on the delights of nature.

A Devil's Dyke

The bus drops you off at the main car park, next to the Devil's Dyke pub. There are fantastic viewpoints from up here, and there are several walks

you could do around the Dyke. Before starting this walk, it seems a shame not to delve into the valley, to appreciate the sheer size of it – it can look deceptively shallow from the top. Iron Age settlers farmed Devil's Dyke over 2,000 years ago and the remains of their hillfort can be seen here.

Apparently, if you run backwards seven times around the two humps in the valley (the Devil and his lady's graves), the Devil himself will appear, so be prudent when picking the spot for your game of rounders.

Walking from the car park along the road, the Dyke appears on your left, and if you carry on a little further, the **South Downs**

Way is signposted from the road. Turn left on to it, following the sign for 'Ditchling Beacon five and a half miles' and walk along with the Dyke on your left.

You're surrounded by wildlife on this walk. Along the way you can spot orchids and butterflies, such as the chalkhill and adonis blues, along with skylarks and yellowhammers.

B Rest a while

Following the South Downs Way brings you down to **Saddlescombe**, where the promise of tea and cake awaits at **The Hiker's Rest**, a lovely little place to get refreshments within the courtyard of the 16th-century Saddlescombe Farm.

At the farm, take the metal gate on the left, signed New Timber Hill, and then follow the South Downs Way to the right, around the farm. The track leads you past cottages on your left and then takes you up a rougher trail under the shelter of trees before coming out on to fields and leading you up along the right-hand side of a sheep field.

It is a moderately steep ascent and I looked longingly at the shimmering buildings of Brighton in the distance and its long blue haze of sea that I could quite happily have jumped in right there and then. There isn't much shade on this walk, it's worth noting. Take hats and water. Or, in my case, take a breather!

G Pyecombe

It's idyllic up on the hilltop, (despite the distant A23) with

Photos: Alamy



Look out for the Jill windmill, a restored 19th-century cornmill

the breeze rustling in the long grass of the meadow, the Downs ahead, with the pretty white 'Jill' windmill in the distance.

Listen to grasshoppers whirr, woodpigeons coo and watch butterflies flit around the late

summer wildflowers. The chalky path takes you down to Pyecombe garage, and you cross the bridge and over the A23, before turning right, up past the church and cottages of Pyecombe. The route then crosses the A273 and into the entrance to Pyecombe Golf Club.

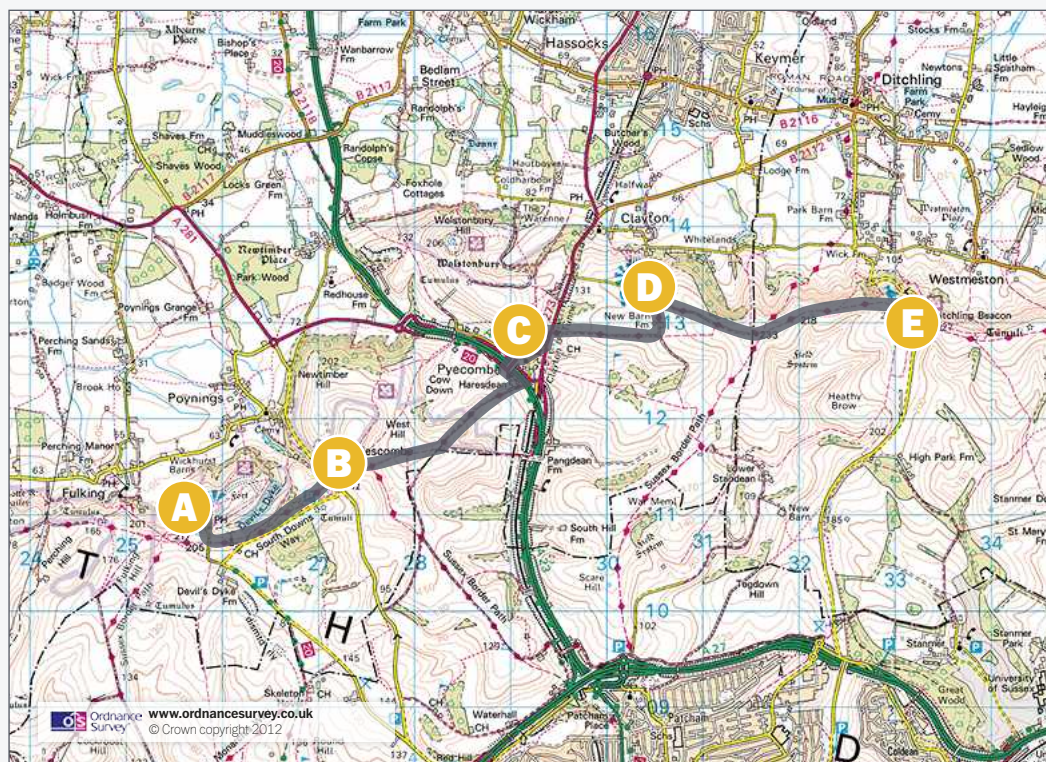
D Jack and Jill The South Downs Way runs uphill through the golf club, again, clearly signed, but narrower this time. You'll reach a crossroad of paths and it is

signed to the left. It passes New Barn Farm and you get to a point where the Jack and Jill windmills lie ahead and the route goes back on itself, to the right. Take a little detour and go straight ahead to view the windmills – Jack isn't open to view, but Jill is a working corn windmill with great views.

E Ditchling Beacon The path leads you up to Ditchling Beacon with stunning views up on the chalk ridge – the sea to your right and views of the Weald on the left. Simply follow the path back to make it a good 11-miler – or relax and catch the 79 bus into town. ●

13 Ditchling Beacon

Walk | 5½ miles | 2 hours | West Sussex



USEFUL INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE

Bus routes run all year round from Brighton to Ditchling Beacon and between Brighton and Devil's Dyke. By car, there is easy access from the A23. On foot, both Devil's Dyke and Ditchling Beacon are on the South Downs Way.

FIND OUT MORE

National Trust

● www.nationaltrust.org.uk/devils-dyke

EAT

The Hiker's Rest Saddlescombe Farm Saddlescombe Road, West Sussex BN45 7DE

A lovely spot to take a break and enjoy sandwiches, salads and cakes in a courtyard in Saddlescombe Farm.



STAY

The White House 5 Church Lane, Pyecombe BN45 7FE ● 01273 846563

A welcoming and handily located B&B in the pretty village of Pyecombe.

NEARBY

Middle Farm

Fire, Lewes, BN8 6LJ
A 625-acre working family farm where children can see Jersey cows, llamas and much more. A farm shop stocks a wide range of local food and drinks.
● 01323 811411
● www.middlefarm.com

MAP

Ordnance Survey

OS Explorer 122
Grid Reference: TQ257110

Photos: Alamy



NEARBY DAYS OUT ON OUR WEBSITE www.countryfile.com/daysout

Arundel West Sussex
Go on the trail of the elusive water vole that's found paradise.

Try beekeeping West Sussex
Julia Bradbury tries a new, natural style of beekeeping – and you could too.



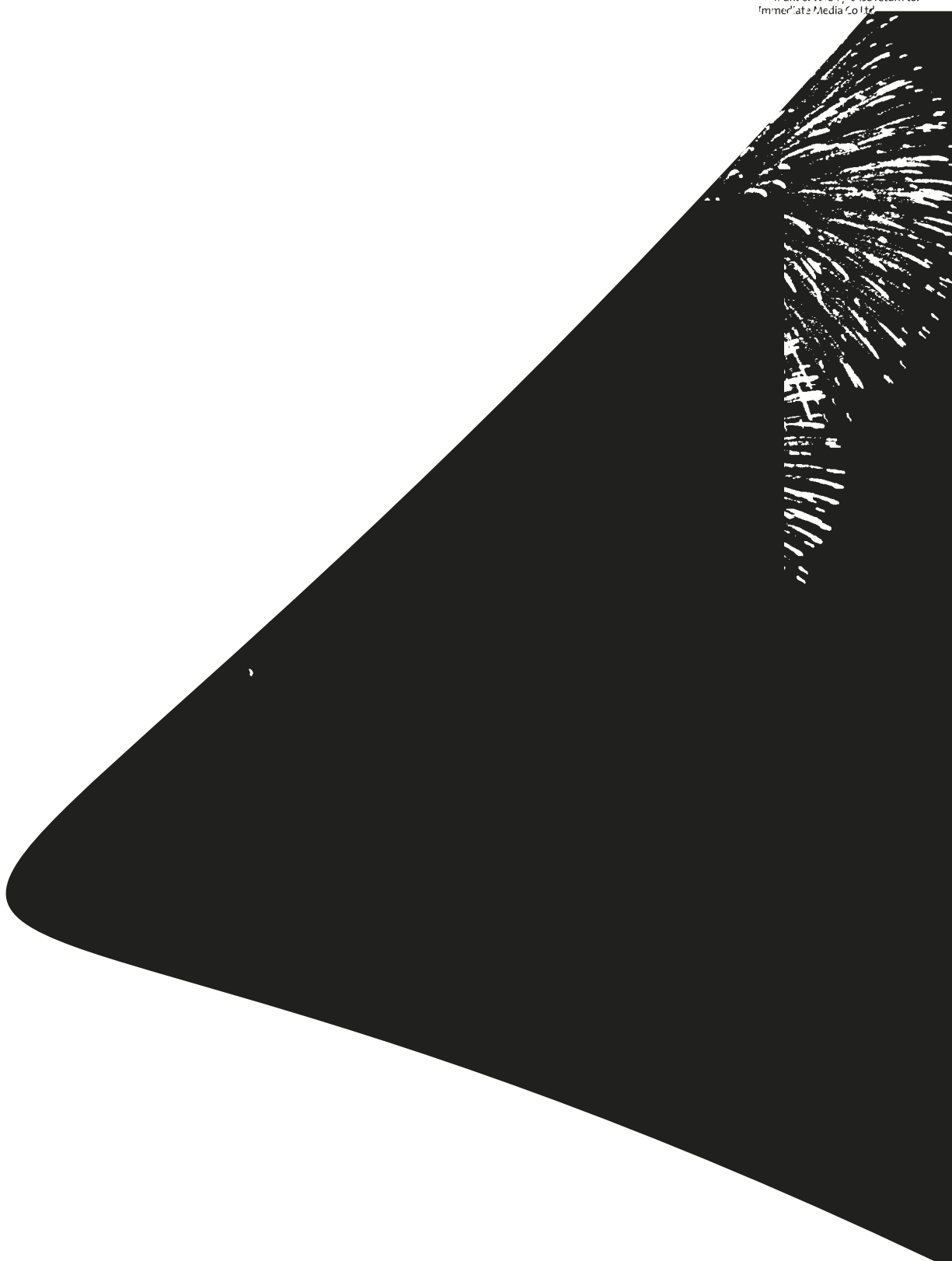
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14 The Llansteffan Peninsula

Day out | Carmarthenshire



Immerse yourself in the last luminous summer light as it shimmers across a peninsula with an intriguing past

By **Julie Brominicks**

At the ripper end of summer, the Llansteffan peninsula is a mellifluous place. From here you will not see the sun sink into a fiery sea, because the coast looks south and the sea lies far beyond salt-marsh. But you can watch the sky turn slowly rosy through rippling meadow grasses after the sun has slunk behind rounded hills. The estuaries seem to drink in the luminous light from the sky and reflect its silvery glow long after dusk.

The whole of **Carmarthen Bay** is a Special Area of Conservation. It's awash with tidal rivers that the coast-path walker can follow inland, propelled high above river banks for views over estuaries and coastal plains, mudflats, saltmarsh and meadows.

Llansteffan peninsula is the digit of land between **Laugharne** and **Llansteffan** with the rivers Tywi to the south and the Taf to the north. The headland of **Wharley Point** looks east to the Gower over **Pembury Forest** and west to where the edge of **Pendine Sands** is blurred by woodland and salt-marsh.

Dylan Thomas roamed here as



Carmarthen Bay has a long history – from its 12th-century Norman castle to more recently, a rich fishing industry

a child when holidaying in Llansteffan or visiting his aunt at Johnstown Farm – later eulogised in his poem *Fern Hill*.

The farmland is rolling and green, hay-mown and accessed by meadowsweet-covered lanes. Trees cluster at the corners of fields and make leafy tunnels of roads going nowhere but the sea from which you emerge, dazzled, on to wide expanses of sand.

Castles and creeper-cloaked rocks border the beach; miles of sand at the edge of which tiny figures, wobbled by distance or heat, harvest rock-samphire or dig for cockles. There are fish to catch too – mullet, mackerel, sea-bass and flounders aplenty.

The landscape is so serene now, so languid. It's hard to imagine the bustle of industry here but it was once very busy

– in the 19th century when the cockle-picking industry boomed. Carmarthenshire cockles were sold in **Swansea** and beyond, and Swansea miners in turn escaped the dark and filthy coal pits for the light of Llansteffan for a week every summer. The wrecks of coal boats, once en route to **Kidwelly**, lie buried like old bones in the sand.

Seasons change

At the mellow end of summer, when the hay is yellow and the light still dances and shimmers across the warm, flowing estuaries, Carmarthen Bay is a good place to be.

In the air is a breath of autumn and a ripeness of hedge – the season's wheel turns. Where better to contemplate the passing of time than among the wrecks of old boats and the bones of pilgrims and poets. ☼

USEFUL INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE

Trains run to Carmarthen, and from there frequent buses run to Llansteffan or Laugharne. By car the A40 runs through Carmarthen and onto Laugharne turning onto the A4066 at St. Clears.

FIND OUT MORE

Llansteffan Tourism

📍 www.llansteffan.com

STAY

Ty Bach Twt

Llansteffan,
Carmarthen SA33 5JS

📍 www.tbtl.co.uk

A cute self-catering cottage just a skip from the beach.

EAT & DRINK

Y Hen Dafarn

High Street, Llansteffan,
Carmarthen SA33 5JZ

☎ 01267 241656

📍 llansteffan.com/yrhendafarn

One of Dylan Thomas's characterful drinking haunts is now famed for its good food.



THE Cat Guide

► in association with Cats Protection

Having a cat is good for your kids

A new survey by leading feline welfare charity Cats Protection has revealed a worrying lack of knowledge about cat behaviour among the young pet owners of tomorrow.

The charity surveyed over 650 school children across the UK (aged between five and 12) who were shown photos of cats and asked to determine what message the animal was trying to convey.

Disturbingly, most children (70 per cent) didn't realise that a cat exposing its belly is relaxed but is not asking for a tummy rub which could result in scratching.

And over half didn't know that cats are solitary creatures and do not necessarily need the company of others.

"These findings show the need to educate the younger generation in animal behaviour," said Nicky Trevorrow, Cats Protection's Behaviour Manager. "Although children love to spend time with their pets, cats do not always need constant attention and company. However, they do of course have certain needs and, if these aren't met, it can lead to stress and behavioural problems."

Other troubling survey findings revealed that:

- Only 17 per cent of children realised that cats communicate mainly by scent
- Only 11 per cent understood that a cat licking its lips can mean it's upset or stressed
- Only 23 per cent recognised a cat's upright tail is a greeting



A CAT IS GOOD FOR YOU!

Recent studies have shown that caring for a cat can do wonders for a child's self-esteem, social skills and sense of responsibility to others so Cats Protection is keen to help young cat owners enjoy a more meaningful relationship with their pets.

If you would like a friendly house cat to become a companion to your kids and help them discover the fun of pet ownership, Cats Protection has launched a find-a-cat service online. Simply enter your postcode... and seconds later you'll see profiles of all the cats available for adoption in your area! What's more, you can adopt with confidence knowing they've been fully vet checked, micro-chipped, neutered and vaccinated.

Find a cat at the click of a mouse – visit www.cats.org.uk/find-a-cat today – or phone **03000 12 12 12**

Further information can be found on Cats Protection's website at www.cats.org.uk/learn/talks-tours along with fun cat-related games, downloads and tips aimed at children at www.cats.org.uk/cats-for-kids



PET FOOD

Take a 'fresh' look at Arden Grange

Grain free, naturally hypoallergenic recipes

Cereal-free, grain-free and gluten-free recipes are becoming increasingly popular with cat owners, and the Arden Grange feline range has been specially developed to suit cats who suffer from allergies or intolerance to such ingredients. The products also provide wholesome and gentle nutrition for felines who have no specific reason to avoid cereals and grains, but whose discerning owners simply prefer to feed a diet which does not include them.

The recipes include a special concentrated chicken & potato recipe for kittens; two standard adult diets 'Adult – Chicken & Potato' and 'Adult – Salmon & Potato'; a new 'Light' recipe which is lower in calories and fat; and an improved 'Sensitive – ocean white fish & potato' food for cats with particularly sensitive skins or stomachs.

We know how important protein

is to the diet of a cat, which is why all our feline recipes contain at least 26% fresh chicken or fish as their primary ingredient. Chicken has a high biological value, making it an excellent protein source for cats. Salmon and white fish are a rich source of essential amino and omega 3 fatty acids, excellent for maintaining a healthy skin and coat. The Arden Grange feline range has been specially formulated to meet the unique nutritional needs of the cat. As obligate carnivores, cats have a high requirement for protein, and all Arden Grange recipes now include meat or fish as the primary ingredient. For example there is 48% salmon in the 'Adult – fresh salmon & potato' recipe and 51% chicken in the 'Adult – fresh chicken & potato' recipe. This ensures that sufficient amino acids are available to support the structural

and metabolic demands of the feline body.

Arden Grange recipes are designed to more closely reflect a cat's natural diet, while providing the balanced nutrition required by our domesticated feline friends.

Palatability is of key importance, and the high proportion of chicken and fish in the diets ensure

that cats enjoy the taste of Arden Grange.

The kibbles are specially shaped to ensure that they are easily eaten when fed dry. All our

2kg and 4kg cat foods

are available in new, resealable bags to ensure maximum freshness for longer.

Each of our recipes contains its own unique blend of nutrients and natural supplements to help promote the optimum health, vitality and condition of your pet, including:

Cranberry Extract –

Cranberries may aid in maintaining urinary tract health. They also have antioxidant properties and may be effective against certain bacteria and fungi.

Nucleotides – Nucleotides play an important role in the metabolism of the body, and may benefit both the digestive system and the immune system.

Prebiotics FOS & MOS –

Prebiotics promote the growth of friendly gut bacteria that in turn may reduce the build-up of harmful bowel flora.

Natural Dietary Antioxidants –

A special blend of antioxidant vitamins, minerals and plant extracts to help to protect the body from the damage caused by free radicals. Dietary antioxidants may also help to support dental health.





Minerals – Minerals are important and have many roles within the body but too much of any nutrient can be just as harmful as a deficiency. The Arden Grange feline recipes include controlled levels of magnesium and phosphorous which in excess are two of the trace elements associated with struvite crystal formation.

Glucosamine, Chondroitin & MSM –

These nutrients are integral to the development, maintenance, and



reparation of cartilage and joints. Together they may help to promote mobility and joint longevity.

Arden Grange is one of the few commercial pet

food manufacturers to include these nutrients in all our complete cat foods.

Omega-3 & Omega-6 Fatty Acids –

Derived from high quality natural ingredients, the correct ratio of these essential fatty acids is associated with benefits to the heart, digestion, skin and immune system.

Taurine – Taurine is an essential amino acid which our feline friends cannot synthesise themselves. Cats are therefore reliant upon a diet that contains added taurine in order to ensure the correct level is provided for its many roles, including a healthy heart, sight and nervous system.

Natural Fibres – Cats can be prone to fur balls and the inclusion of these natural fibres may help to ease the fur gently through the digestive tract. The fibres also help to provide a highly palatable 'crunch' to the kibble.

Natural Preservatives – Every Arden Grange recipe is stabilised naturally with mixed tocopherols (vitamin E) and rosemary extract.

All our products are naturally hypoallergenic and free from wheat gluten, beef, soya and dairy products. This may reduce the risk of dietary intolerances and allergies that can cause digestive disorders and skin complaints.

Arden Grange pet foods are manufactured in the UK to a strict recipe and we will never reduce the quality of our ingredients because of market prices.



Arden Grange have a range of complete, super premium, naturally hypoallergenic, grain free diets suitable for cats of all ages and lifestyles. For more information and stockists, visit www.ardengrange.com

email enquiries@ardengrange.com

or call **01273 833390**



ARDEN GRANGE
nutrition without compromise



01



02



03



04

Summer ease

Practical clothing for all outdoor adventures in sunshine – and rain Words: Joe Pontin



14



13



12



11

1 Women's Premiere Watergem adjustable one-piece swimsuit Speedo, £35. Pop this in your pack for an impromptu swim to break a day's walk on the coast path. The flattering cut smooths your body shape. 0345 850 8582, <http://store.speedo.co.uk> **2 Children's Gotland all-weather coat** KosiKidz, £69. This Swedish jacket costs double the cheaper alternatives, but the waterproofing works well, and it's resilient and thoroughly made. 01302 746680, www.kozikidz.com **3 SoftFibre Trek Towel** Lifeventure, £13.99 (medium size – 80cm x 65 cm). OK, cotton towels feel nicer,

but this wins on practicality – it's compact and dries quickly. 0118 981 1433, www.lifeventure.co.uk **4 Ladies' Atca Shorts** Paramo, £46. Simple, hardy and comfortable shorts. 01892 786444, www.paramo.co.uk **5 Men's Gi III Pants** Patagonia, £65. Light trousers that roll up small and won't hold creases for long. 0800 026 0055, www.patagonia.com **6 Chute Water Bottle** Camelbak, £13.99. Durable and easy to use. **7 Men's Compresslite Packaway Hooded Jacket** Craghoppers, £60. A good value lightweight insulated jacket that packs down

small and keeps out cool winds. 0844 811 1022, www.craghoppers.com **8 Men's yarn dyed check leisure 16" watershort** Speedo, £23. Quick-drying shorts for late summer swims. 0345 850 8582, store.speedo.co.uk **9 G30 Stability insole** Granger's, £16.99. If your feet get sore after a day's slog on hard trails, insoles like this can make a surprising difference. This one has a latex-heel cushion for shock absorption – and is soothingly squishy underfoot. 01773 521 521, www.grangers.co.uk **10 Women's Simona Quick Dry Top** Ayacucho, £25. Keep cool and comfortable in



05



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this quick-drying vest top. 01666 575 500, www.cotswoldoutdoor.com **11 Alzir women's rain jacket** Didrikson's, £130. Stylish and well made, with lots of appealing design touches. Like many other lightweight rain jackets, there are no vents, but there's a good, detachable hood. Other colours available. 01275 390451, www.didriksons.com **12 Panoramic Pod** I Want One of Those, £15.99. Record 240-degree views using your smartphone with this simple device. www.iwantoneofthose.com **13 Stratos 36 men's backpack** Osprey, £90. If you only own one

pack, it might as well be a decent size. This is big enough for lugging picnics to the beach and loading up for a day's walking in changeable winter weather. Compression straps keep even a small load stable, the 'trampoline' system keeps your back cooler on hot days, and the pack is comfortable to wear, with a wide hip belt for support. The women's version is the Sirrus. 01202 413920, www.ospreyeurope.com **14 Women's Overcast shirt** Patagonia, £60. Well-cut easy-care shirt in a soft but strong fabric, with 30-UPF sun protection. 0800 026 0055, www.patagonia.com

TEAM TEST:

LIGHT FOOTWEAR



By BBC Countryfile Magazine features editor Joe Pontin

When the weather is warm and sunny, lightweight footwear tends to be cooler and more comfortable. Here are three options for walking on balmy late summer days:



Grassbow Mid-Sport GTX
Merrell, £120

These boots look great and feel comfortable, with decent ankle support. Their low weight and breathable fabric makes them pleasantly cool. I found rain seeped through – but if you can run to a pair of light boots for dry weather only, these are a fair option. 02033 762 738, www.merrell.com



Men's T Cirrus Mid GTX boots
Mammut, £135

Excellent, grippy soles, firm ankle support, and a stable, surefooted sensation as you walk. These are substantial boots, well cushioned for comfort and protection but still relatively light at 818g. On the other hand, the waterproofing membrane is pretty effective in the wet. www.mammut.ch/en/



Crosser GTX RR men's shoes
Zamberlan, £125

While these shoes are only half the weight as the Mammut boots, flimsy they are not. The Vibram sole is robust, grippy and supportive. My feet kept pretty cool beneath the breathable fabric, and the waterproof membrane repels water well. 01665 510660, www.zamberlan.com

Luxury escapes to the country

Relax and feel refreshed after a mini-break at one of these unique rural retreats in beautiful countryside



This map is for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to represent definitive scale and detail.

1. TREGENNA CASTLE RESORT



Tregenna Castle Resort in St. Ives Cornwall offers over 80 bedrooms within the castle and over 70 unique self-catering cottages, apartments and lodges nestled within the 70 acre estate. From a wide range of amenities and facilities from enjoying delicious, locally sourced food in the relaxed Brasserie to an indoor and outdoor swimming pool, various ball courts and even a par 3, 18 hole golf course, Tregenna is the perfect holiday destination.

☎ 01736 795254
www.tregenna-castle.co.uk

2. THE DEVONSHIRE ARMS HOTEL & SPA



The Devonshire Arms Hotel & Spa set on the 30,000 acre Bolton Abbey Estate in the Yorkshire Dales National Park is a perfect location for exploring some of the county's most stunning gardens including Parcevall Hall, RHS Harlow Carr & Newby Hall, our kitchen garden is also open to guests.



☎ 01756 718111
www.thedevonshirearms.co.uk

3. HIGHCLIFFE HOUSE DEVON



Come to Highcliffe House, an award winning B&B set within Exmoor National Park with stunning sea views across the Exmoor hills and coastline. Exclusively for adults we offer the perfect place for an escape to some of England's most majestic and diverse scenery. This beautiful Victorian house is situated above Lynton & Lynmouth with views to take your breath away.

☎ +44 (0)1598 752235
www.highcliffehouse.co.uk

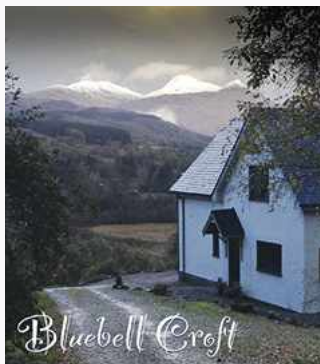
4. TOP ECCLES FARM



A Peak District holiday that won't cost the Earth. Today we are all keen to reduce our environmental footprint, but we also want to have lovely holidays. At Top Eccles Farm 'Eco Barn' you can do both. We offer self-catering accommodation for four people with en-suite double and twin rooms, private kitchen, garden and a terrace with fabulous views. Meet the alpacas. Relax and feel refreshed.

☎ 01663 750372
www.topecclesfarm.co.uk

5. BLUEBELL CROFT



Bluebell Croft consists of two luxury 5 star self-catering houses in the Highlands. Honeysuckle House sleeping eight, Rose Cottage four. Take both for a special relaxing gathering. Dogs welcome. Beautiful views, log fires, Aga and hot tub with mountain scenery, make Bluebell Croft a special place for the perfect holiday.

☎ 014967 402226
Chris and Chrissie Morgan
www.bluebellcroft.co.uk

6. ESTUARY COTTAGES



Come and stay in the beautiful, sheltered Fowey Estuary in one of our quality cottages or apartments. Explore the river, secluded sandy coves and wooded countryside. Relax and enjoy the atmosphere of one of the most beguiling seaside locations in Cornwall. Out of season short breaks available. Call or email for details.

☎ 01726 832965
www.estuarycottages.co.uk



DAMSON DENE HOTEL

Tucked away in the tranquil Lyth Valley, the Damson Dene Hotel is the best place for a relaxing break. With friendly staff, great spa facilities and gorgeous grub, our accommodation is ideal for those wishing to bring their dog away for a holiday in the lakes - a real walker's paradise.

015395 68676
www.bestlakesbreaks.co.uk



DING DONG COTTAGES

2 cottages and a cabin on the wild, romantic moors of the Land's End Peninsula. Each in its own plot within 8 acres of garden and meadow. Breathtaking views in all directions, walk into open country from the doorstep with the coast not far away. Sleeping from 1 - 5, or up to 10 if booked together.

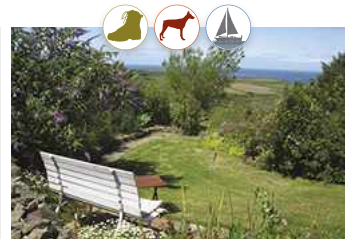
01736 363677
www.dingdongcottages.co.uk



PLAS DOLGUOG HOTEL

Resembling a miniature nature reserve, Plas Dolguog Estate has consecutively received the David Bellamy Gold Award for Conservation. Ground floor rooms and many rooms with balconies overlooking Snowdonia National Park. Local area walks. A short drive to beautiful Aberdyfi beach, RSPB Ynys Hir and The Osprey Centre.

01654 702244
www.plasdolguog.co.uk



GARN GRON, NORTH PEMBROKESHIRE COAST

Cliff and countryside walks from the doorstep and just a mile to coves where seals have their pups in autumn. Well equipped and peaceful cottage for four between Fishguard and Strumble Head. Large garden and games room, stunning views.

01348 872746
www.garngron.co.uk



CHYPRAZE FARM, CORNWALL

Situated a mile down a secluded lane and perched above a beautiful sandy cove this 150 year old working farm is a perfect base for countryside lovers. Our five bedroomed self-catering farm sleeps 12 and is ideal for families or groups and is available all year round.

01494 871387
www.chyprazefarm.com



WHITECHAPEL COTTAGES, NR EXMOOR

Three character cottages situated in over 500 acres of farm, woodland and lakes. Providing a sanctuary for wildlife including red deer and otter. Perfectly placed for exploring Exmoor and its coast. Onsite kayaking, bike hire and fishing. Big play barn with spa and sauna facilities. Pets welcome.

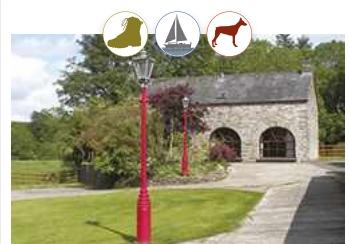
01769 579633
www.whitechapelcottages.com



DECOY FARM COTTAGES

Our working fruit farm is the perfect retreat from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Perfect base to explore the RSPB nature reserves and natural beauty of this area. Three self catering cottages sleep from two to six, ideal for families, walkers and bird watching. Quiet rural location eight miles from Rochester and close to London and Dover.

0794 6088646
www.decoy-farm-holiday-cottages.co.uk



DOLHAIDD MANSION COTTAGES WEST WALES

Four charming cottages, each sleep 4-6, in 25 acre country mansion estate. Private trout and salmon fishing. Abundant wildlife. Ideal base to explore unspoilt Cardigan Bay beaches, Preseli Hills and Pembrokeshire Coastal Path. A warm welcome awaits you all year round.

01559 371802
www.dolhaiddmansion.co.uk



OWL BARN RETREAT

Offers stunning self-catering accommodation set on the edge of the Tanat Valley in glorious Mid Wales. We enjoy a stunning rural location surrounded by the Berwyn Mountains, rolling fields and wildlife. With its beauty changing season after season Llanrhaeadr is a special place to relax, unwind and reboot.

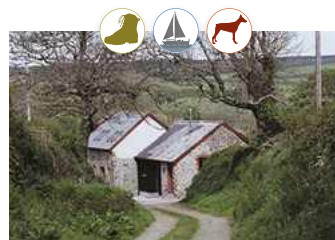
01691 780491
www.owlbarnretreat.com



ST ANTHONY, HELFORD, CORNWALL

Warm welcoming waterside cottages in a unique setting beside Gillan Creek. Superb coastal and riverside walks with unequalled boating opportunities. Hire kayaks, sailing and motor boats from your doorstep. Easy launching and moorings available. A fascinating playground for children with safe paddling, swimming and crabbing.

01326 231 357
www.stanthony.co.uk



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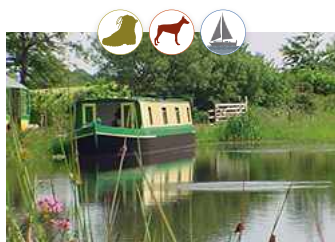
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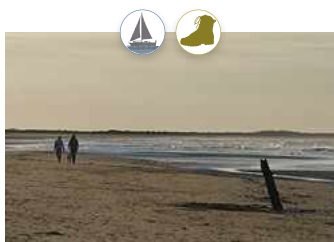
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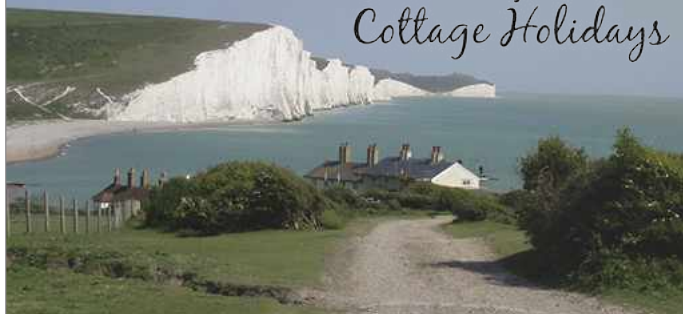
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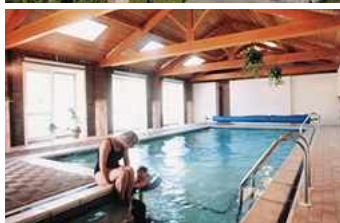
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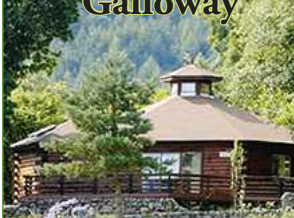
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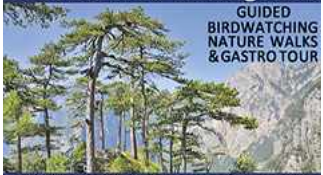
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My countryside

with *Rupert Evans*

The Village star on belligerent bulls, the splendid isolation of the Highlands and the sheer joy of trees

I grew up in Staffordshire on a small farm, about 100 acres, which my parents still live on. My grandparents also lived there before them, so the farm and the countryside, the heart of England really, are very much part of my life. I go back to the farm often. It has been a real place of refuge and a place where I can recoup.

As a child, I was very, very accident prone. I remember distinctly getting thrown into a hedge by a bull. The horns of the bull went either side of me – I was very lucky – and I was tossed into a hedge of stinging nettles. My mother had to pick me up and drop me into a bath of Dettol. I remember it being very painful. My left thumb has marks on it from several stitches because

I cut it off in some random way trying to saw some wood. Also, I was obsessed with tractors. I would sit in tractor cabs a lot and also used to fall asleep just watching the tractors go up and down the fields – it was very hypnotic to me.

We liked to explore wild places. Just beyond our farm was a ruined Norman castle, Chartley Castle, one of the last stopping points for Mary, Queen of Scots before her execution. As children, we played there, which would inform our imaginations. We'd play crusaders, and cowboys and Indians.

I love to visit Scotland, the Highlands, particularly the west coast. It's truly our last wilderness in Britain, where there really is no one around for miles and you can feel

totally away from everything. For me, that's a really thrilling experience.

One reason I like being out in the wilderness is because I find exercise very helpful mentally. It calms me down and it seems to ground me. When I go outside, I can stop my brain and I'm just thinking about the next step. I can take in a view of what I see and I find that a very meditative, very calming kind of feeling.

It annoys me that it's very hard to make a living as a farmer. People who live in the countryside and work there are not thought about as much as those who live in the city. I think policies generally are very city-centric and urban-based. The government, on a local as well as a national level, could help people to live in the countryside and not necessarily be so dependent on the land, to be able to diversify.

What appealed to me when I first read *The Village* was the idea of a television programme where the camera never leaves the village. We see the effects of what goes on in the wider world, but we see it on a very micro level and we witness how people interact and how they live their lives – different strata and different types of people.

My favourite animals to see in the wild are deer. My father used to take me up to Cannock Chase, where you climb up to the top of a tower and watch the deer. I have never gone stalking but I remember one day going walking on my own in the Highlands and coming over a hill and there was a stag just standing there, chewing. And it just looked at me – it didn't run – and I stopped still and I was quite close. It was majestic, beautiful.

I think it would improve the countryside if people planted trees. I adore trees. We don't plant enough trees. Trees are the lungs of our planet. Children love trees. I recall my father making us all plant trees, and I've always rather liked that.

My rural hero is Pip Evans. He's my dad, and he has contributed to woodlands in Staffordshire, and always buys his Christmas tree from a Cannock Chase renewable woodland specialist!

The second series of *The Village* starts on BBC1 on August 3, TBC



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Henley-on-Thames 18-20 Reading Road, Oxfordshire RG9 1AG
Tel. 01491 411812
Letchworth Pkmore Avenue (half mile from Letchworth Station) Hertfordshire SG6 1LJ
Tel. 01462 482310
Milton Keynes Stacey Bushes Trading Centre, Erica Road MK12 6HS
Tel. 01908 711290
Romford 270 Hornchurch Road, Romford (next to Tesco Extra) Essex RM11 1PZ
Tel. 01708 474133
Tolworth 2 Red Lion Plaza, 366 Ewell Road (half mile from A3) KT6 7AZ
Tel. 020 8987 5471
SOUTH COAST
Brighton & Hove Newtown Road Trade Park, Hove, Brighton BN3 7BA
Tel. 01273 711576
Poole/Bournemouth Poole Road, Poole, Dorset BH12 1DA
Tel. 01202 765037

St. Leonards-on-Sea (near Hastings) 1 Marine Court (on seafront road) TN38 0DX
Tel. 01424 460511
Southampton 9 Lower Northam Road, Hedge End Village (Exit 7 off M27) SO30 4FN
Tel. 01489 787851
WALES & SOUTH WEST
Bristol 4-5 Concorde Drive, off Greystoke Avenue (Exit 17 off M5) BS10 6PZ
Tel. 01179 508253
Cardiff Penarth Road Retail Park (one mile from Morrisons) CF11 8EF
Tel. 02920 707287
Cheltenham Gallagher Retail Park, Manor Road (Exit 10 off M5) GL51 9RR
Tel. 01242 578334
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